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100  
POEMS

To Theo  
after 25 years

# 100 POEMS

*by*

Edward Thompson

1944

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## PREFACE

BETWEEN the first half-dozen pieces in this book, the work of a boy of seventeen, and the latest lie some forty years. Arrangement is roughly chronological, except that the poem printed last of all, *Harbour Music*, is not recent.

The two or three 'Conrad' poems perhaps need a word of explanation. Oriental poets in their own name or an assumed name often add their personal comment on what they have written. For example, after Radha, Krishna's mistress, has rhapsodized about her lord, the poet, onlooker to the passion he has expressed, will give a verdict, sometimes of the naïvest and most obvious sort, yet by its simplicity effective, as 'Chandidas says: Maiden, love has pierced thee to the heart'. Or this statement may take the form of a précis of what has gone before, or a corollary. In the Persian mystics, it is often a distillation of the sense of what has been diffusedly shown. The method seems fitted, in its impersonal standing apart from personality (your own mood regarded as already a detached and shredded thing, open to impartial judgement), to cloak thoughts or suffering one would not care to expose. 'Conrad of Elsass' is a character in my very early play, *The Enchanted Lady*; the name had served me in occasional journalism.

There seems nothing else to add, except thanks to my wife and younger son for criticism and help in selection, and to my friend Mr. H. M. Margoliouth, of Oriel College—and acknowledgements to Messrs. Macmillan, who have generously allowed me to take eighty pieces from books they publish, and to Messrs. Secker & Warburg, for leave to use seven poems from *New Recessional*. Twelve pieces are now collected for the first time.

E. T.

OXFORD,  
October, 1943

## CONTENTS

1. THE KNIGHT MYSTIC . . . . .	I
2. A SOUTHERN GARDEN . . . . .	3
3. THE EDEN . . . . .	4
4. PASTORAL . . . . .	5
5. THE GRAVE BY THE RIVER . . . . .	6
6. THE OCTOBER MOON . . . . .	8
7. TYRANNUS SUI . . . . .	8
8. PILGRIM'S PROGRESS . . . . .	11
9. THE ETERNAL COMRADE . . . . .	12
10. CHRISTUS IMMANENS . . . . .	12
11. 'THERE IS A SPOT' . . . . .	13
12. THE NEW YEAR . . . . .	13
13. EVENING . . . . .	14
14. THE CRICKET-PITCH . . . . .	15
15. THE LEPERS' HYMN . . . . .	15
16. THE STREET-LAMP . . . . .	16
17. 'THE SUN DROPS LOW' . . . . .	16
18. 'THIS BRIEF DAY WILL PASS' . . . . .	17
19. 'THIS SWORD OF VERSE' . . . . .	18
20. THE TALE OF DEATH . . . . .	19
21. NIGHT AT Q'ALIT SALIH . . . . .	20
22. THE PASTURES OF SANNAIYAT . . . . .	21
23. REMEMBRANCE . . . . .	22
24. MEADOW-ROSE . . . . .	23
25. MIND-VALLEYS . . . . .	24
26. LIEUTENANT SOWTER . . . . .	25

27. EDWARD SCARTH	.	.	.	.	.	25
28. 'THE MAN THAT HAS WITHDRAWN'	.	.	.	.	.	26
29. THE RIVER-FRONT, KUT	.	.	.	.	.	26
30. AT SHUMRAN	.	.	.	.	.	27
31. THE SUFI'S PRAYER	.	.	.	.	.	27
32. BETH-HORON	.	.	.	.	.	28
33. AUJEH MEADOWS	.	.	.	.	.	30
34. THE DEAD HORSES	.	.	.	.	.	30
35. SKULL AND STREAM	.	.	.	.	.	32
36. TO W. G. RUSHBROOKE	.	.	.	.	.	32
37. HALF-LIGHTS	.	.	.	.	.	34
38. VIA TRIUMPHALIS	.	.	.	.	.	34
39. BUSH AND BIRD	.	.	.	.	.	39
40. FROM THE WILDERNESS	.	.	.	.	.	40
41. 'THOU LIVING PURPOSE'	.	.	.	.	.	41
42. AT RAYAK	.	.	.	.	.	41
43. DAMASCUS ORCHARDS	.	.	.	.	.	42
44. YARMUK VALLEY	.	.	.	.	.	43
45. INSCRIPTIONS, DOG RIVER, SYRIA	.	.	.	.	.	44
46. THE OWL AND THE LADY	.	.	.	.	.	44
47. NORTON COMMON	.	.	.	.	.	46
48. SMOKING REEDS	.	.	.	.	.	46
49. WILLIAN TREES	.	.	.	.	.	47
50. THIS ANCIENT THORN	.	.	.	.	.	47
51. PILLARS OF HERCULES	.	.	.	.	.	48
52. 'WHY SHOULD I SHRINK FROM LIFE'	.	.	.	.	.	48
53. EVENING VOLUNTARY	.	.	.	.	.	49
54. REBUKE TO BANYANS	.	.	.	.	.	50
55. SRĀVAN	.	.	.	.	.	51

56. THE <i>BĀDAL</i> . . . . .	51
57. AN OLD WOMAN . . . . .	52
58. THE BANYAN'S GUESTS . . . . .	53
59. THROUGH THE RAIN . . . . .	53
60. EKTESWAR <i>MELĀ</i> . . . . .	54
61. LEPERS . . . . .	56
62. TWO WOMEN . . . . .	57
63. FLOWERS IN BOWL . . . . .	58
64. THE AUTHOR WRITES HIS OWN EPITAPH . . . . .	59
65. THOUGHTS ON THE ISLIP WITCH . . . . .	60
66. A PARABLE FROM NATURE . . . . .	63
67. ISLIP . . . . .	64
68. CHERWELL FLOODS IN MAY . . . . .	64
69. WATER-FINDERS . . . . .	65
70. CROWNING MERCIES . . . . .	66
71. INTERCESSION . . . . .	66
72. ROYAL AUDIENCE . . . . .	67
73. A PERFECT BEAR . . . . .	68
74. PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	70
75. VALETTA FROM THE SEA, 1927 . . . . .	70
76. OLIVE GROVES; LUDD, PALESTINE, 1927 . . . . .	71
77. 'THIS BRAIN, WITH SORROW'S DINT' . . . . .	72
78. THOUGHTS AT AN O.U.D.S. PERFORMANCE . . . . .	73
79. 'A THOUSAND FACES FILLED THIS ROOM' . . . . .	74
80. EPILOGUE . . . . .	75
81. EAST RIVER, BROOKLYN . . . . .	75
82. ROAD TO HARPER'S FERRY . . . . .	76
83. IN HOSPITAL, BROOKLYN . . . . .	76
84. THE WATCHER OF THE FORD . . . . .	77

85. RIVERSCAPE	.	.	.	.	.	.	81
86. IN UMBRIA	.	.	.	.	.	.	82
87. BILLS OF LADING	.	.	.	.	.	.	83
88. REPENTANCE FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY	.	.	.	.	.	.	85
89. BARODA WILDERNESS	.	.	.	.	.	.	86
90. SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE	.	.	.	.	.	.	88
91. NEW RECESSIONAL	.	.	.	.	.	.	90
92. BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON	.	.	.	.	.	.	93
93. 'WHEN YOU SAW PARIS'	.	.	.	.	.	.	95
94. IN THE GUILDHALL OF BABYLON	.	.	.	.	.	.	97
95. THE EAGLES GATHER	.	.	.	.	.	.	100
96. ENGLAND, JUNE, 1940	.	.	.	.	.	.	102
97. IN THE WILDERNESS	.	.	.	.	.	.	103
98. DIXIT INSIPIENS	.	.	.	.	.	.	106
99. BROKEN SILENCE	.	.	.	.	.	.	108
100. HARBOUR MUSIC	.	.	.	.	.	.	109



## THE KNIGHT MYSTIC

**T**HEN in the silence where I stood  
I saw the grove was dark about;  
The married monarchs of the wood  
With sombre umbrage quite shut out

All light of sun, all glimpse of moon,  
Or stars that nightly fill the sky,  
In the mid blaze of fieriest noon  
Exclusive of the sun's hot eye.

Yet in that darkness, heavy, close,  
God knows I did not cry for light;  
Alone and silent there, God knows,  
I wished not human sound or sight.

Nowise the unknown, the unseen I feared;  
Darkling, I did not think to pray;  
So near was God, that speech appeared  
Vain trustless blasphemy that day.

Nearer than flesh or frame He stood,  
Stirring by life and soul and brain  
The languid pulses of my blood  
To earlier ecstasies again.

Kneeling in spirit, but in limb  
Steadfast, unquivering, unafraid,  
With unveiled eyes I stood by Him,  
Pavilioned with obsequious shade.

One was I with that Living Light  
Whereof all stars and spirits be,  
Whose tabernacle is cloud and night,  
Whose ways are firmament and sea.

Then from that height I wandered down,  
And sought the common steps of men ;  
With hamlet and imperial town  
My thoughts grew conversant again.

But folk, that marked my mien and eyes  
Unlike the man's they knew so well,  
Questioned me, and in earnest wise  
I opened all I had to tell.

'I have walked and talked with God indeed,  
Nearer than any saint, and I,  
Though known a weak and worthless reed,  
(Marvel of marvels !) did not die !'

'Thou hast walked with God? How looked He then?'  
With passionate eager speech they cried.  
'And thou hast talked with Him?' Again :—  
'What message bring'st thou from His side?'

But I—as from the inrushing sea  
The lava oft recedes a space,  
To gain an awful mastery  
And shatter all the mountain's base—

So, in this flood I could not stem  
Of curious questionings, dumb I stood ;  
Then after fain had opened on them  
The flood-gates of an angrier mood.

But something on the scornful thought  
Put rein, till gentler speech held flow :—  
'Of visible lineament saw I naught,  
Nor what, if aught, He spake I know.'

And, though they pressed for definite word,  
I knew not, and I could not say.  
And though they scoffed 'Lo ! one who heard  
Yet bears no echo of speech away !'

I heeded not. 'I dreamt, no more !'  
Maybe. I only know I gained  
Somehow a strength not mine before,  
Though since invincible maintained.

## A SOUTHERN GARDEN

**A**RIBUTUS and myrtle grow  
Round about the flowering closes,  
Paved with petals white as snow  
Dropped from the embowering roses.  
Ilex and acanthus there  
Front the lurking winds that fare,  
Warm and winged, above the beds  
Whereon the oleander sheds  
Blood-red blossoms, falling lightly.  
Here is pleasant noise of rain,  
Here the Sun-god's shafts gleam brightly,  
And 'neath mellow moons that wane,  
Wax, and wane, and wax again,  
Scent of rose and tuberose,  
Gillyflower and lilyflower,  
Blows against the patient face  
Of the god who guards the place,  
Carven Hermes, where he stands,  
Fleet of feet, and strong of hands,  
Pleased, though not in Arcady,  
In this rival heaven to be.

**F**AIR river rushing to the sea!  
 Whose waters green are bordered thus  
 By woods renowned in venerie  
 And islands set with mimulus !

Whose laughing billows leap and glide  
 By sleepy Appleby to where  
 Thy sister Eamont brings her tide  
 From out knoll-bordered Ullswatèr !

Surely, fair stream, thou art the queen  
 Of sliding rivulets crystal-clear,  
 Whatever currents cool and green  
 The wise of other realms revere !

The tribute of a thousand hills,  
 That buttress up the heavens, is thine ;  
 Thine the unnumbered tumbling rills  
 From Hèlvellyn to huge Pennine.

The raven over thee, from gaunt  
 Crossfell, flies, far aloft desried ;  
 The peewit and the heron haunt  
 The meadows at thy willowy side.

Campanula and tansy tall  
 Bloom where, in shade of hedgerows cool,  
 The luckless urchin meets withal  
 His sportive namesake, fresh from school.

By many a bridge with fronded walls,  
 Where rue and brittle spleenwort grow,  
 The otter, as the twilight falls,  
 Whistles and dives for prey below.

And where the sward is smooth and green,  
With sentinel rushes set about,  
Pavilions of the fairy queen  
Are pitched for revel when light goes out.

## PASTORAL

**L**ONE in meadows where the wind  
Plays along the whistling green,  
Corydon and Ancar bind  
Wisps of hay, with laughing mien.

Seated at their side, behold,  
Rapt with unbelieving smile,  
One fat bunny, brown and bold,  
Hearkens with Ancaria while

Corydon the tale relates  
Of the men of other days,  
Strivers with untoward fates,  
Rough and stern in all their ways,

Savage tribes, and Thracian folks  
Who the gods held not in awe.—  
Bunny looks most wise and strokes  
Furry stomach with one paw.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Now the fields are shorn and bare,  
As a pavèn palace-floor  
Smooth; and only here and there,  
Where the grasses wave no more,

Hillocks, tangled, warm and green,  
Stand across the pleasant lea  
(Greener isles were never seen  
Upon any summer sea).

Corydon upon the expanse  
Looks with anxious eyes about;  
Then, with wily countenance,  
Brings another story out.

Tells of Proserpina's woes,  
But, before the story's done,  
Brings with action to its close  
Tale that was with words begun.

Bunny laughs outright and stares;  
Dropped are ropes and dropped is hay;  
And another Pluto bears  
His Proserpina away.

WITH pain he reached the water-side;  
He crawled upon the turf and died;  
And till a long day's force was done  
He lay exposed to breeze and sun.

His lips were foul with ooze and dredge;  
His locks were braided black with sedge,  
Which twined with tresses not his own  
That forehead, cold as Parian stone.

But with the falling of the dew  
And night's slow conquest in the blue  
The kindly spirits that ride the air  
Received into their pious care,

Bidding the winds together bring  
The wrecks of many a bygone spring,  
And, whilst they gathered leaf and stem,  
Proclaim the stranger's requiem.

And Nature, that had given a grave,  
Did also from corruption save,  
That still, 'neath piled-up leaves and loam,  
He sleeps within his quiet home.

And here, oblivious of the damp,  
The glow-worm lights her evening lamp,  
And voice to voice, across the swell,  
The nightingales sing loud and well.

And aye his body from repose  
Stiffens, and stark and rigid grows,  
At those two hours when, east and west,  
God's presence is most manifest.

For when the dawn breaks up the night  
And heaven's highways with torch doth light,  
And when the gathering sunset thrills  
The waiting silence of the hills,

His conscious hands are clasped in prayer,  
And, wholly purged from taint of care,  
His glowing face, beneath the sod,  
Turns, like a sunflower, to his God.

**N**ow, she that is of heaven the shepherdess  
 And casts sinister influence on the seas,  
 Who rules the Plough, the Bear, the Pleiades,  
 All stars with their conjunctions, great and less ;  
 Whose sway the gathered clouds of Jove confess,  
 When drawn together by the Hyades,  
 (Those rainy Kids that empty to the lees  
 Heaven's cisterns high, when grapes are in the press  
 And jolly Autumn reels with vintage home),—  
 I saw her mounted in the Night's cool dome,  
 'Mid stretching clouds of more than marble whiteness.  
 A circling nimbus clung like yellow hair  
 About that face of sun-surpassing brightness,  
 And underneath the sleeping Earth lay fair.

**H**E martyred at the self-same stake  
 Both Faith and Love for Truth's sweet sake,  
 And as some cone, though capped with snow,  
 Bowelled with writhing fires below,  
 Beneath a wan cold face he bore  
 A nature tortured to its core.  
 The passions which beset his soul  
 Brake never through the fierce control  
 Which shewed a part, but masked the whole.  
 Hope in a captive leash he held,  
 And Fear's rebellions sternly quelled,  
 Until to outward view at length  
 He stood in self-sufficient strength,  
 Who in his chambered being's hold  
 As paramount denizen controlled  
 The traitors who were fierce of old.

Yet, as a thousand thoughts begin  
Their stifled parliament within,  
When the mild night's maternal sway  
Emancipates, and tears away  
The stern proscription of the day,  
First awed and hushed, then gathering tone,  
Till to a fierce insistence grown,  
So whispers grim at times would fall  
On the stark silence of that hall,  
Whispers, God knows, of tortured hosts,  
Some living still, some long since ghosts,  
Whispers which rose to scream and shout  
Flat blasphemy and treason out.  
Till that rebellious babel filled  
Each corner of the courts it thrilled,  
While brushing Shapes, that bore no form,  
Would from forgotten crannies swarm,  
A hideous rout, with mocking cry  
And laughter as they rustled by,  
Shapes greatly daring, bold to peer  
Into the face now chilled with fear,  
Whose touch, though lifted as it pressed,  
Seared like white iron the shrinking breast,  
And like a biting tremor passed  
Through the poor soul that cowered aghast.

O, had ye only seen him then,  
Seen as he was this man of men,  
Beleaguered, every egress locked,  
A raving captive, caged and mocked,  
Though Lord of Walls, within them known  
A tyrant foiled and overthrown,  
Ye would have cast no word of hate  
At those proud lips, that upright gait,  
Nor dared to front with hostile brow  
Those masking eyes, whose silent glow

Lay like some tarn, whose darkened breast  
Is cover to a vast unrest,  
Seeming to say nor less to hide  
All is not well beneath its tide,  
From whose far depths, with tossing surge,  
A tortured spirit might emerge.  
O had ye known him thus, and seen  
What lurked behind that iron mien,  
With little heart for hate and ire,  
Only with pity set afire,  
Ye would have cast this brother's care  
At the great Mother's knees in prayer,  
Beseeching, for her woman's part,  
Our Lady of the Stricken Heart  
On these worn lids her peace to impress,  
Oblivion of the old distress,  
The sleep-in-life from which the soul  
Wakes like a child, renewed and whole,  
Or to seal up that shuddering breath  
With God's great second gift of death.

**E**ACH cornered stone, each thorn shall sting  
Thy tortured feet to bleed afresh.  
To every jagged point shall cling  
Some morsel of thy flesh.

In torment of thy hottest noon  
The taciturn unfeeling sky  
Shall beat thy limbs to flag and swoon,  
And bring thee near to die.

No rock, no bush shall bless thy sight  
With lure of shelter for awhile  
From flaunting glare of ghastly light  
That paints each hideous mile.

And, when the way behind is cast  
And thou canst well the gates perceive,  
Requital of thy laboured past,  
Red in thy latest eve,

The bliss for which thou didst forswear  
Thy once much-cherished vanity,  
For all thy sacrifice and care  
Perchance is not for thee.

The veriest phantom of a town  
May dance before thy cheated gaze,  
Or thou at last mayst wander down  
Into forbidden ways.

I KNEW Him late? Not so! Our feet have trod  
 One path since Time began;  
 Ages ere I was man  
 This comradeship was known.  
 And for the love which lives betwixt us twain,  
 Whose long fulfilment fell to Time alone,  
 (Since none could of a thing so old and great  
 The far beginning give or any date  
 To that which knew nor birth nor travail-pain)  
 It waxed, but did not wane,  
 Nor shed its leaves, as human loves which grow  
 Deciduous, stripped before each whirling snow,  
 But in deep splendour ran  
 This root whereof I hold the blossomed rod  
 Far back into the purposes of God.

I KNOW whose fingers fell with light caress,  
 I know whose whispered word  
 My sinking spirit stirred  
 And soothed this dull distress.  
 How can I help but know Him, since He lies  
 In every path apparent to my eyes,  
 Unmasked by every lifting wind, and known  
 By shadow with each shaft of sunlight thrown,  
 Revealed with every breeze  
 That draws apart the green skirts of the trees?  
 It were less strange should I move unaware  
 Of this firm sod, this circumambient air,  
 Than if I knew Him not whose way must lie  
 Beside my own for all eternity.

**T**HREE is a spot, dim-seen behind our trees,  
 Where for a space, ere sunny hours are told,  
 Whoever goes goes garmented in gold ;  
 And I, to take my ease,  
 Oft-times, my book flung idly on my knees,  
 That transitory company behold,  
 Yea, much have mused and marvelled as they went  
 In sun-brave pilgrimage magnificent.  
 By largesse of that generous ample air  
 Enwrapped with light beyond an angel's dream  
 The beggar moves ; nor king, if king were there,  
 More glorious than his meanest hind would gleam.  
 No eyes but mine behold this daily show,  
 The folk, the clinging glow,  
 The ruddy stems of that majestic road.  
 I watch my fellows go,  
 Priest, labourer, child, the coolie with his load,  
 All, man or woman, playing lad or maid,  
 In one obliterating pomp arrayed.

## THE NEW YEAR

**R**ED berries on the banyan !  
 And in the pipal-tree  
 The sickle of a silver moon  
 Most beautiful to see !

Red berries on the holly !  
 And in the apple-leaves  
 A waxen gleam of mistletoe,  
 A rustling stir, a silver glow,  
 White beard and sickle's glint which show  
 A Druid ghost of long ago  
 That gathers in his sheaves !

• **H**ERE, in my quiet toil apart,  
My verse remembers still  
The passions of my former heart,  
My fierce tempestuous will.  
I put my ragged duster by,  
I lay the worn chalk down,  
I do not hear the jackal's cry,  
The tomtoms of the town.  
The perished years long shadows cast,  
And on my spirit's wall  
Rich hues by music's power amassed  
And eager figures fall.  
Then, in the tranquil words I write  
A wind of memory makes  
Such stir as in our Indian night  
May ruffle sleeping lakes.  
So in their moat at Mandalay  
The lotus-blossoms dream  
Of queens and emperors far away  
And Time's fast-running stream.  
Dark fires along the castled banks  
Beneath the wan moon burn;  
With pomp of drum and marshalled ranks  
The exiled years return.  
From Irawadi's depths the ghosts  
Of buried glories glide,  
And o'er the drowsing plain long hosts  
Of vanished warriors stride,  
Till even through Amarapura blows  
A stirring breath, where sit  
The Buddhas in eternal doze  
While bat-winged centuries flit.

To choose a pitch we walk.  
 How beautiful beneath the drowsy skies  
 Of falling eve the quiet landscape lies,  
 And in this gracious air  
 The white roofs of the Lepers' Home how fair!  
 I gaze, we talk.  
 What say'st thou, friend? Mine eyes  
 Unearthly glory fills, nor is there found  
 Within mine ears a way for human sound.  
 Some unseen power has touched all things, and now  
 All ghost am I, and thou.  
 This mortal scene dissolves, nor can I see  
 If comrades still we tread eternity,  
 But in what meadows dim with light I stride  
 I marvel, and whose voice is at my side.

I HEARD the lepers singing as I went  
 Towards the jungle; gleamed ahead the line  
 Sharp-green of sal-trees; silent earth gave sign  
 Of rain to fall; no less my soul, long dry,  
 Catching from lips of pain that thankful cry,  
 Grew' ware of showers and, rapt to nobler mood,  
 To graver musings turned and thoughts which blent,  
 Diverse, to one consent  
 (For who, so blest, would dare division make  
 Of lesser from the greater gratitude?)  
 As thus: the Word  
 Became flesh; and this eve the drought will break  
 In torrents; rice to-morrow will be springing;  
 And God to-day has heard  
 The lepers singing.

**H**ERE in this light we met; and, though the street  
Is trodden daily by ten thousand feet,  
This score of years no other folk I see,  
But still the road is walked by only Thee.

17

**T**HE sun drops low, the moon, hung face-to-face,  
Waits for her hour; a whispering sudden gust  
Dances amid the dust,  
And stirs the trees from calm,  
Bursting upon their silence like the psalm  
Which from a saint's long meditation leaps,  
Crowning with foam of praise his spirit's deeps.  
It sinks, and in their spreading tops again  
Quiet her kingdom keeps,  
While sunset tints their trunks with ruddy grain.  
Men seek their homes, the noise of day dies  
down;  
Still Heaven expects the grace  
Which on her aching brows Rest's golden crown  
Will set, a peace from pain,  
And gentler radiance through all paths will shed  
Of light which lives not till all light is dead.

Conrad of Elsass says: O Soul, of Him  
Thou dream'st who shines when other lights are dim!

**T**HIS brief day will pass, surely pass,  
 And many at the Name  
 Of Him I worship cast reproach and blame.  
 Yea, men will say, 'Alas !  
 This man, so poor, so broken, at the end  
 Was lost, for all he boasted God his friend.  
 Admit him weak, a fool beyond belief,  
 A child for silly pride,  
 And bowed with childish fears and childish grief:  
 But yet he loved; and in his strength he tried.  
 Ah, could not He  
 That raised the dead and made the blind to see  
 Have caused it that His servant had not died?'

So men will speak, and so  
 Will through their homes a wind of question blow,  
 And clamour of tongues awake  
 Along Earth's ways, an hour, ere friends forget  
 That Conrad's sun has set.  
 But Thou, that little heed  
 Of men's wild words and wilder thoughts dost take,  
 Behold Thy servants jealous for Thy sake !  
 And, lo, how love dare duty's bounds exceed !  
 Yea, Conrad asks, grown bold :  
 What thing is this, hereafter to be told,  
 That Thou, a King, dost unto service call,  
 Yet leave Thy sons amid dark ways to perish,  
 Unhelped to stray and fall,  
 For all Thy Name that in their death they cherish ?

**T**HIS sword of verse I bear within my hand  
The years have fashioned ; thus, and thus, I bade ;  
But they, for higher mandate that they had,  
With patient eyes elsewhere to my command  
Not hearkened, neither wrought it as I planned  
But damascened with shining joys and clad  
The hilt with gems that make the gazer glad,  
And plunged in hissing griefs the bitter brand.

Yet men, that dream not of the heats which made,  
Chide the sure poise and beauty of the blade,  
Till cold its master seems and wrapt apart.  
The brightness blinds.—To you this truth appears :  
No warrior wields it, but a child, whose heart  
Is weak and troubled oft with causeless tears.

## THE TALE OF DEATH

*(January-July, 1916)*

**F**ROM Orah, Felahiye,  
Sannaiyat, Hanna, Sinn,  
Dujaleh, Nasiriye,  
The tale of death came in.

Death, where the soldier stands  
Burnt in an eight-foot trench ;  
Death, in the blinding sands ;  
Death, in the desert's stench ;  
Death, where the reedbeds' mesh  
Traps, and the Arabs prowl ;  
Death, in the fly-blown flesh  
And the water scant and foul ;  
Death, where the flarelights fall,  
An hour ere dawn's faint flush,  
And we jump the garden wall  
(Six hundred yards to rush) ;  
Death, where the P-boats go  
Packed with their huddled pain ;  
Death, where the strong tides flow  
By Busra to the main ;  
Death, where the wind's hot breath  
Fails, and the fierce seas burn ;  
Death, in the docks ; and death,  
Where the stretchers wait their turn.

From Nasiriye and Sinn  
The tale came in ;  
And the shark-tracked ships went down  
To Bombay town.

**T**HE unhasting stream, unruffled deep and placid ;  
The long mud walls, the mirrored groves of date ;  
Clamour of frogs and crickets ; in the sky  
The marshfowl's cry ;  
When lo ! the dusk is stirred ;  
White sail aloft, and like a giant bird,  
Moving along the river's glassy face  
A boat glides in, dim with mysterious state,  
Fades down the night ; and all  
Is as the years had fled and left no trace  
Since days of thine, Harun-ar-Rasid !

THE pastures of Sannaiyat  
Are flanked with grass and reeds ;  
The pastures of Sannaiyat,  
Where now the plover feeds.  
Black partridge saunters slowly  
Along the thorn-cracked walls  
And sand-grouse unto sand-grouse  
Across the river calls.

The pastures of Sannaiyat  
Lie broad 'twixt stream and sedge ;  
The marsh's silver mirrors  
God gave the land for hedge.  
'Twixt tamarisk and papyrus  
A tongue of sand He thrust,  
Where jerboas build their burrows  
And scurry through the dust.

And Tigris, racing seaward,  
Remembers here a space  
The storm of human anguish  
That swept the desert's face.  
The flocks are grey hyenas,  
And here the jackal feeds—  
On the pastures of Sannaiyat,  
Sannaiyat flanked with reeds.

**W**HEN I remember all the ways I went  
 Companioned as was never man before  
 Companioned, even so the heart grows sore  
 With too much pain of musing, memories blent  
 Of joy and sorrow, thoughts of bruise and fall  
 And petty wrongs that wake to tyrannize  
 The man that lives their thrall,  
 For all his friendly skies.

Ah, Lord, at last to think on other things !  
 The woods, with trembling wings  
 Aflutter, and with glimmer of golden light  
 Most glowing and with emerald leafage bright !  
 The flower-sown darkened ways with bean and clove  
 Rich-scented ! Dusk that sought her poet-lover,  
 With rustling step and breath of clustered roses !  
 And, dim to maple-closes,  
 The owls slow-flitting from the roads, the skelter  
 Of fury lives to shelter !  
 Dear Wind, my friend, the o'erclambered bushes shake  
 And flood the wearied brain  
 With breath of rose and honeysuckle again !  
 Dear Wind, my friend, awake,  
 That Night may come, tall Night, my Mother  
 bringing  
 A sound of nightingales and rivers singing,  
 Of woodlands murmuring and of blossoms swaying,  
 Of homing wings, of little children praying,  
 Of life and wandering tides that seek the deep ;  
 That Night may come, and after Night come Sleep !

*Before Kut, 1916.*

THY love is a meadow-rose,  
Which clings to the earth, and grows  
Away from the wind, with blossoms whose opened face  
Of wonder and innocent grace  
Meets children, marvelling on their joyous ways  
Where the crimson lamps of the poppy blaze  
In the southward-streaming wind, and the purple light  
Of the orchis-torches makes the tall grass bright.

The rose by its scent is known,  
Its golden heart and ivory petals spreading,  
Globes of light in the branches thickly sown,  
And a sward for the elves' gay treading.  
Lover of Souls, Thy place is  
In the wind-swept grass-grown desolate spaces,  
Where the air blows sweet  
And cool to the brows of Thy roaming child,  
And a path worn smooth by the punctual feet  
Of Thy ministering friends leads over the wild.

*Upper Tigris, August, 1916.*

<sup>1</sup>*Rosa Arvensis*, the Field Rose.

IN the green valleys  
Where never wind blows,  
Light of days forgotten  
Lives at daylight's close.

Springs I once rejoiced in  
All their sweets disclose ;  
Pomegranate-blossom,  
Mayflower, and rose;

Summer's belts of heather,  
Slopes of bramble-rose ;  
Autumn's every fruit-tree  
There in thickets grows.

Down the green lawns  
And by the stream grows  
All of fruit and flower  
That Memory knows.

Folded far, and hidden,  
Whose way no man knows,  
Deep lies the valley  
Beyond its girdling snows.

Here is only winter,  
Chill, with early snows ;  
The Tree of Life stripped,  
With death in its repose.

Yet dreams perchance may wander,  
In the tired mind's repose,  
Down the green valleys  
Where never wind blows.

OUR seven days' guest, he came and went his ways.  
Walking the darkness garlanded with praise.  
Our seven days' guest ! Yet love that this man gained  
Others have scarce in three-score years attained.

NIGHT fell, and slowly o'er the blood-bought mile  
They brought a broken body, frail but brave;  
A boy who carried into death the smile  
With which he thanked for water that we gave.  
Steadfast among the steadfast, those who kept  
The narrow flank whereby the Leicesters swept,  
Amid the mounded sands of ancient pride  
He sleeps where Grattan fell and Adams died.

**T**HE man that has withdrawn a space  
 To tremulous ways of peace,  
 And seen that Leader face to face  
 Whose looks are Light's increase,  
 Cleansed from all guilt, he sings, and knows  
 For him all paths run right;  
 Shrived and erect, his spirit goes  
 Nakedly back to fight.

Now him nor hopes nor fears can fret,  
 Nor any griefs can hold,  
 Howe'er his heart remember yet  
 Loves that have been of old;  
 For him all works and strifes are o'er,  
 And, while the calm hours run,  
 He waits, as for the tide the shore,  
 And as night for the sun.

### THE RIVER-FRONT, KUT

**T**HE mud-strips green with lettuce, red with stacks  
 Of liquorice; shattered walls and gaping caves;  
 Beyond, the shifting sands and jackal's tracks;  
 The dirging wind, the wilderness of graves.

**R**ED Autumn on the banks,  
 Where, through fields that bear no grain,  
 A desolate Mother treads  
 By the brimming river, torn with rain !  
 A chill wind moves in the faded ranks  
 Of the rushes, rumpling their russet heads.  
 And out of the mist, on the racing stream  
 As I drift, I know that there gathers fast,  
 Over the lands I shall see no more,  
 Another mist, which with life shall last,  
 Till all that I watched and my comrades bore  
 Will be autumn mist, in an old man's dream.

**T**HOUGH in the front of folk I call Thee Lord,  
 And such high titles use  
 As men to glorify their great ones choose,  
 Yet in the silence of my heart is word  
 Far other ; facing Thee in darkness, I  
 'Dear Comrade,' and again, 'Dear Comrade' cry.

**N**IGH south from Jaffa, leaving the gray beach  
 And glinting sea, strike in, until you reach  
 A plain, whose wide arms, seized of wheat and oil,  
 With flowers and foison crown a bounteous soil,  
 A plain that, warm with fostering airs that bless,  
 Sleeps in the lap of its own loveliness.

Yet pause not here; though Heaven and Earth may  
 sing

Congratulation, and Eternal Spring  
 After her lilies sow incessant flowers,  
 And temper with sea-winds the hotter hours,  
 Yet there's a spot my thoughts prefer to trace,  
 So long as Memory keeps her sovran place.  
 Behind the fields a rifted narrow pass  
 Leads in, and shouldering mountains heave and mass,  
 Whose highest fell still carries scar and sign  
 Of one fierce hour, however bramble-vine  
 Sprawl on the stones, and wild-rose over rocks,  
 Confusedly heaped, trail a loose arm, and stocks  
 Of live-oak bristle with armèd emerald leaves.  
 Starved hawthorns thrust up soiled and ragged  
 sleeves

From ground that seems of Nature's coarsest plinth  
 Compact, one drab mosaic; terebinth  
 (Dwarf, to be sure; nought comes to stature here,  
 Where briar and hawthorn flower in fifty year)  
 Crops out in spots; and scattered fig-trees stand;  
 And there's an oliveyard on your left hand,  
 As up the slope you climb, at top to find  
 The line of stones the Londons crouched behind.  
 We had machine-guns here; see, still the ground  
 With empty cartridges and round on round  
 Of unused ammunition strewn! Hard by,  
 Tins, belts, a shirt, and rotting helmets lie.

The hill-foot has its graves. But of that strife  
The tale is dead, and here insurgent Life,  
In briar and brave green ilex lifting, fain  
Would of that wrath rub out the hateful stain,  
And, for the sterile hour that slew and hurt,  
Would, as she may, her ancient place assert.  
Yet these loose stones, hurriedly flung together,  
Shall witness, through the storms of fiercest weather,  
Of what a storm once swept an earlier day  
And tossed men's lives like withered leaves away.  
Lo, as, by tracing trench and mound, we tell  
Ere history dawned where warriors fought and fell,  
And know, by ditch and tower and builded ramp,  
Where once the Legion kept their busy camp,  
So here, if any follow after, bearing  
Like blood with us or for our story caring,  
Though centuries hence, they of our day shall read,  
Scratched on the hill's hard brow, our graven screed:  
Here how we lay, one bitter dusk of winter,  
When bullets glanced and bit the rocks, and splinter  
And nosecap sang, and all the air was torn  
With iron, and shattered stone, and twisted thorn;  
Here how we lay, and ducked, and watched the foe,  
And kept the height.

They, seeing this, shall know.

(*The Jaffa Aujeh*—‘*Waters of Raqqon*’ of the Old Testament—was crossed by the 52nd Scots Lowland Division on the night of December 20, 1917.)

**M**IDNIGHT ! a dark slow water, deep and chilly !  
(Still by our dead the trench-scarred slope we hold.)

Waters of Raqqon, let your water-lily  
In valour’s praise its yellow buds unfold !  
Let gladiolus its red banners flaunt,  
And light of flowers o’erflood your purfled shores !  
(Around those graves what deathless memories haunt—  
Midnight and wading men and muffled oars !)

Make of their graves a garden, lest they mourn  
For lowland heaths and fields of sunlit corn !  
Ay me ! Not all your meadows shall atone,  
Waters of Raqqon, for the meadows known !

**A**LONG the road, round rock and boulder spring  
Blue crocuses and white,  
Great hosts of white, knit in fantastic ring,  
Like elves that dance about some giant-King  
Who lies with dreamless head,  
Drowsing, and all but dead,  
Chained by enchantment through the Ages’ flight.  
Down the cliff-walls, where cling  
Bright moss and ragged scrub,  
Cool waters slip and flow.

This is the way the Anzac horsemen swept;  
And this the way where came  
The Turks, those few, like singed fierce beasts from  
flame,  
Who from the slaughter by Abana leapt,  
Seeking the mountain-track  
To Syria's Hollow Vale,  
With that pursuing dread  
Hot-breathing at their back.  
Dead ponies sprawl, on each five yards or so;  
Their ribs our lorries crush,  
And pound their shattered skulls into the slush.

Whipped out of life, with sob and straining limb,  
With bursting heart, with bloodshot eyes and dim,  
Lame maddened starved, they died.  
See, here one tried  
To struggle on, but fell; another made  
Some few yards more, to frantic shout and drub;  
This third essayed  
The stony slope, but dropped, a quivering corse,  
Lashed in death's tremors, lashed, with curses hoarse.  
So their poor lives like grain  
Were flung in handfuls, so they might avail  
For one more hour of flight and frenzied strain,  
One hour's escape from that relentless woe,  
And swift obliterating restless foe.

**B**EYOND Damascus, where the air blew chill,  
 Snow-boding, and the whistling wintry flaw  
 Round rock and crevice rang, a skull I saw  
 Facing the plain, chance-tumbled in a rill.  
 The sparkling water checked and curved, to fill  
 The shell where Reason once gave Passion law,  
 Then, under broken arch and fleshless jaw,  
 Danced out, to slip and glitter down the hill.

This white far-gleaming dome was late a brow,  
 In decent semblance clad—a plaything now  
 For wind and stream ! For laughter of human lips  
 In the naked fangs is ripple of water's speech,  
 While the One Life strives here, in life's eclipse,  
 Its old unheeded patient will to teach.

**S**UCH greeting as our country Muses know  
 Be yours, old friend ! Sannin's high bank of snow  
 Looks on me, on this boulder as I lie  
 And let the golden afternoon drift by.  
 Close muffling holm-oak, bryony's evergreen  
 Binding a budded ash, make here a screen ;  
 The blunt-nosed bee swings past on my retreat,  
 Searching the ilex vainly for hid sweet ;  
 Tall crimson windflowers lift through butcher's  
 broom ;  
 Brumana's pines across the valley loom,  
 Black groves and thrusting ridge where Flecker came.  
 Now pales Sannin's white brow ; a setting flame,  
 The sun hangs low, on Homer's wine-dark sea.  
 Soon over Lebanon will wander free

Our Huntress-Moon, soon Hesper shine, who home  
Gathers the straying thoughts of men who roam.  
My thoughts, that these nine years no paths have  
known

Save alien, till themselves half-alien grown,  
Turn back—perchance, in Faunus' hands this sprig  
Of late-flowered broom is made a dowsing-twig  
That brings remembrance' hidden springs to light.  
So thought of you shines in my west this night,  
And, as I turn within, to where the glow  
Leaps out, from knotted pines, these rhymes I throw  
For crackling salt on where that other fire  
Broods, deep withdrawn, and with clasped hands  
desire

Whatso Penates wait on Friendship's hearth  
To bless your ways, in forum, field, and garth.  
See, ere I go, far down the shadowed steep  
I gaze, and think, beyond that twilit deep,  
How Rushbrooke dwells, and for your sake invoke  
Our kindly Gods of broom and shining oak.  
Me, since no trespasser, if these accept  
As their true worshipper, who aye has kept  
With vows and tears their garlands fresh, my prayer  
Not idly forth into the night will fare.

*Aleih, Syria, March, 1919.*

## HALF-LIGHTS

Now on this shadowed mood  
 What message falls?  
 As one who hears in a wood  
 Echo of vanishing calls,  
 Surely I caught through stir  
 Of the minutes' tick low cries?  
 Caught through the candle's blur  
 Light of remembered eyes?

I am listening, would ye speak!  
 Ah, if your love were here,  
 He would be strong, now weak!  
 The vision dimmed would clear!  
 Ruined and foiled though left,  
 I should repel Death's scorn!  
 More than the Strong Man's theft  
 Would from his grasp be torn!

## VIA TRIUMPHALIS

THE deep clear racing brook; the bridge  
 Spanning both tide and river  
 And linking the Road<sup>1</sup>  
 Whereby they came,  
 Graving on rock each sequent name—  
 Briton and Greek,  
 Frank and Assyrian,  
 Roman and Ramessid!  
 On the far bank, where winds make quiver  
 Those creepers hanging like woodnymphs' hair,  
 Under the tangle the shapes are hid

<sup>1</sup> The Dog River—Lycus of Strabo—north of Beirut. The im-memorial coast road crosses it. There are over ten Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions on the rocks—also a Greek, and one by Marcus Aurelius, Arab and French inscriptions, and now ours.

(Time-blurred) and arrowy script which speak  
Of the march of the arrogant Ninevite.  
At hand, see the Stoic's entablature,  
Rock-cut, which blazons Aurelius' boast !  
New glaring white,  
Lo, at its side what words proclaim,  
Where the tide thrusts tongue-like in from the coast,  
And the rains and the years' slow drift  
Have buried the Flint-Man's tools, where pale  
Pink flowers the branchèd asphodels lift—  
Lo, there what words flaunt the tale,  
At the Ages' end how my comrades strode,  
Late in the centuries, last up the Conquerors' Road !  
But rocks with their deeds let the Victors fill !  
We have found a bliss that transcends their skill.  
So, leaving the chiselled cliffs that declare  
Whose fames would fain with the rocks endure,  
And leaving the ancient sea, whose waves  
Of merchant and corsair whisper and dream,  
Checking the bragging garrulous stream  
With name for name, his Turk to their Tyrian,  
Strike in, to the hills' wild heart ! Strike in !  
Let your wonder begin !  
Lift, lift your eyes,  
And thrill with surprise,  
Aye, shout for the sight,  
Far in, beyond height upon height,  
Of Sannin, of, shouldering and snowy, that culminant  
ridge,  
Clear beautiful white,  
And cleansing the vision !  
Strike in, with the clear rushing water beside us,  
And . . . that light at the valley's end !  
Ah, the tall swaying feather-topped grass,  
Deep as where the boar lurked when he slew  
Adonis ! At foot of the glade,

A pampas, a wind-ruffled palisade  
Of thyrses such as the Sylvans bear,  
In the river-sand  
For a kindly purpose set, be sure,  
Since they hide, when the good Pan wills,  
A man and a maid alone in the hills,  
Alone, with all Gods to connive and befriend,  
Where, placed for a guard, the great fells stand !  
Lo, the brambles drooping, as when at the fair  
Proud desolate Goddess, all wild, as she flew,  
All anguished, they caught, and her blood splashed  
the thorn,  
Splashed the rending briars,  
And the Syrian uplands rang to her wail  
For the hunter-lover all gashed and slain,  
And the mocking caves,  
Whose floors the Flint-Man's weapons strew,  
From dripping ice-pillared vast recesses,  
Her sorrow cast back in derision !  
Sombrelly showy, the brambles trail,  
And, as for memorial, lift where we pass  
Red boughs ! And the rose-thickets, tinct with grain  
Of Autumn's glory, with scarlet leaves  
Dashed through and through,  
Blush deep with haws, as once with roses,  
And glow, as a withered covert when fire's  
Hot tongues in the dry sticks bicker !  
But the Hill-Gods call; and they chide us,  
Who on our steep path linger;  
They have scattered the way with their signs to  
guide us;  
They await their child,  
The Lady for whom snowy crest, steep vale,  
Were a home, and in lonely elf-beloved closes  
The Forest and Winds were a foster-folk,  
Till one, by whose speech a magic woke

Subtler than breathed from their music wild,  
Drew near, and she turned, being mortal maid,  
Leaving immortal lovers to mourn.

But she comes to your valleys again !

And a golden circle the crocus weaves  
Idly, to hold her fast, who by spell  
Stronger by far, can escape at will !

Yet blossom, and spill

Through the fairy cracks your vanishing gold !

Vainglorious, flaunt ! She is here to behold !

And let the quaint small spikes unfold

Of dwarf bee-orchis ! And clefts be lit

With cyclamens' flaming brushed-up tresses !

We have come to the heart

Of the hills, where the Great Gods dwell,

Who, wise themselves, wish lovers well ;

And the wilderness deepens round,

Slope on slope, thicket on thicket piled,

And the river is hushed by the River-God's  
finger,

And hums, as it slips through the stones.

Plucking apart

The carob-boughs, we will climb and sit,

Where a giant boulder juts

Far out, and the eyes can look

Up to the ridge which the thin firs crown,

Can look down

Over the sharp stiff gleaming fence

Of ilex, and over the sprawling dense

Jungle of fragrant wax-berried myrtle,

To the quiet-singing brook.

Not ten miles hence,

In the copse where the Hunter died,

From his blood-drops sown in the soil

Sprang, purple and large,

The windflowers aflush by the river's marge,

And in rifts and ruts  
Of the storm-seamed fells aflutter aglow ;  
And, Spring by Spring, these brakes still know  
Whose presence quickens the hallowed ground !  
For Kypris walks,  
Where the drab hard rocks to her grace are foil,  
Foil till the hem of her swaying kirtle  
Touches the herb and the budded stalks ;  
When brute Earth atones  
For the murdered boy, for the harboured boar,  
For the shrinking flesh that the briars once tore,  
Atones, with worship of blossom and leaf,  
For the wanton wrong, for the bitter grief ;  
And Lycus, thridding his purfled mazes,  
His voice to a jubilant chant upraises ;  
And Kypris walks, and the glimmering sheen  
Of her robes waves, emerald-green on the green !

As down the Kedron Valley I was riding,  
Where olives veil the rock-cut tombs I saw  
An owl, who neither for myself had awe  
Nor of that glaring hour had thought save scorn,  
But ruffed his wings and perked each feathered  
horn,  
In anger that I came ; but I was glad.  
For why ? You ask, as chiding  
A mind so lightly stirred.  
Know then, this joy I had  
For sunlight on gray leaf and ragged stone ;  
But most to see, vouchsafed to me alone,  
There, on Athene's bush, Athene's bird.

**T**HIS is he that came  
Praising God in flame.

Through the desert's burning air,  
With lips too parched for prayer. . . .

And in battle's gulping tide,  
When friend and helper died. . . .

Lord, when clamant fears were loud,  
This is he nor bowed  
Nor denied the Name,  
Nay, but overcame.

Whence this man, so hurt and frail,  
So set, as in a jail,  
'Mid days that suffered wrong,  
He shall stand among  
The angels, who excel in grace  
Yet shall yield him place.  
And, should they question why,  
These his scars shall cry,  
Shall answer and proclaim:  
This is he that came  
Praising God in flame.

**T**HOU Living Purpose, dimly understood,  
 Thou Whom I held for known,  
 And Whom I served, a Will beyond my own,  
 What is this word  
 Now in the darkness of my spirit heard?  
 And what this questioning, whether ill or good  
 I know not, so my heart is vexed  
 And all my mind perplexed?  
 Whether Thou art at all, or just and wise  
 (As once we held) and good past all surmise,  
 Or evil, is a thing hid from my eyes,  
 That only know Thou art not to be found.

Pity the heart Thy hands have made, the will  
 In darkness wavering, fain to serve thee still!  
 Now, ere the day in cloud and mist go out,  
 Answer, and save! Now, in this dusk of doubt,  
 To this poor flickering mind that perisheth,  
 Ah, speak, with some clear word, of life, not death!

## AT RAYAK

**M**ID-WINTER; and through Anti-Lebanon  
 Our sick men shivered as the train crawled on.  
 A desolate wind over frore tundras whistled,  
 Rattling and clanking the stiff willow-beds;  
 In the orchard hedges mistletoe and haw  
 Glistened with ice; sharp gleaming black aiguilles  
 Shed their precipitate loads on the white fields.  
 Beyond, on loftier Lebanon were fogs  
 And numbing sleet; and choking storms of snow  
 Clotted the air; a sheeted wall shone out,  
 Makmal, Sannin, Khenisiyeh and Baruk.  
 To southward, mightiest Hermon shut the vale.

At Rayak, halfway in the hollow heart  
Of Syria, ere we climbed to Lebanon,  
I saw a Turkish prisoner building dumps.  
His shirt and shorts in ribbons round him hung;  
His bare frost-bitten feet winced as they splashed  
The icy pools. Shaking with cold and fever,  
He raced about his work, with wild scared eyes.  
Good-natured groups stood by, and watched him  
there.

LOVELY with almond-blossom and flooded water,  
**L** With wind-flushed sheen of swaying orchard-  
meadows;  
With azure starred of infrequent grape-hyacinth;  
Misted blue with the fig-groves' wintry haze;  
Ruddy with budded apricot; snowy with apple—  
Damascus, now into April glory awakening.

LIGHT green of tamarisk shows  
Pale on the dark sharp oleander-leaves ;  
Deep through a jungle Yarmuk flows,  
With loop and curve his swift path cleaves ;  
And the long valley glows,  
A burnished shield, far-sheeted with gold,  
With light packed full as the hills can hold.  
Though tamarisk's head's but a clouded dust,  
His beauty faded, his youth grown pale,  
Red hollyhocks  
Flower from the steep rough rocks ;  
Rose-laurels over the oil-black shale  
Their fragrant pink-tipped spears upthrust ;  
And the reed-muffled brook through the vale  
Runs glad, for the Goat-God lies—  
Great Pan, whom mosquitoes trouble not,  
Who, being a Baal, is immune from flies—  
Piping at ease in some wind-cool grot.

PANELLED in rock, the bearded kings, with hands  
 Outstretched for menace, overlook the sea;  
 Still the neat script, cut on their bossèd robes,  
 Cries out for homage—side by side they boast,  
 Pul and Sesostris. The tall asphodel  
 Flowers from their bases down to the green flood  
 Of rushing Lycus, and the cyclamen  
 Roots in the crevices. And, higher yet,  
 The runnels after rain wash free from clay  
 Stone adze and arrowhead—this rough plateau  
 Was once a mart, the caveman wrangled here:  
 The ass's jawbone, set with flints for teeth  
 (Ages ere Samson), the proud purchaser  
 Flourished and bore to battle; ships of Tyre,  
 Sailed, late, these waters, driving to their creeks  
 Coaster and coracle and timid hide.  
 Here, when Egyptian, when Assyrian, came  
 Time had waxed old, and nations had grown tired.

Owl in the hollybush,  
 Sitting so still,  
 With wide eyes staring—  
 What Fear climbs the hill?

Sit close in your covert,  
 Your crimson-set fence  
 Of sharp glowing leaves!  
 What, bird! You flit hence!



Now, through the winter eve  
Tinted with flame,  
Riding, a Lady  
Along the wood came.

Over damp drifted leaves  
That deadened her pace,  
She rode, nor drew rein  
Till she saw the round face;

Then, checking her horse,  
She raised her fair head  
To the frost-polished leaves  
And berries deep red.

★      ★      ★      ★      ★

If the bird were a man,  
He would leap for the sight,  
But the foolish old owl  
Is already in flight!

On the pale flushing skies,  
To wet fields he flits down,  
And is lost, as he settles,  
Brown wings in the brown.

LOWING at last, now Pix  
Through willowherb's jungle of gray dry sticks  
Straggles, while thwart-flung twig and grasses  
In flakes of shadow his waves thrust down.  
Black-berried privet cowers, drab forlorn,  
And the ragged thorn  
Out of all his swelling crimson crown  
Scarce a handful lifts of wrinkled haws.  
Flits furtive jay round bushes brown,  
And, with sudden rush under briar's red clusters,  
Fugitive blackbird flusters.  
Through the mist-suffused air, fine-drawn like gauze,  
A filmy wraith, December passes,  
And, seeming at rest in the heaven's half-height,  
The sun that should climb hangs mild and white.

SEE how the struggling fire  
From the damp heap in a white wraith escapes !  
But, deep within, the red heart fiercer glows,  
Till with a leap the ghost becomes a god,  
And shouts and dances on his shrivelling cage.

THE winter evening spills  
 Its store of quietness ineffable,  
 And from its horn of beauty fills  
 The empty elms with sunset.  
 Low fields lie blue in distance ; the grove throws  
 A shadow-copse on the gleaming lake's repose.  
 Against the darkness glows  
 One lamp, a diamond.

THIS ancient thorn now like a beggar stands,  
 Thrusting through tattered sleeves its agued hands  
 That shake to the chill breeze, a mendicant  
 For such poor boon as niggard skies will grant  
 (Dribbling, as misers might, faint straggling beams,  
 Bronze rays of light, for Summer's golden streams).  
 Yet in old days this beggar was a Chief,  
 Regal with flowery crown and emerald leaf;  
 To beast and bird his bounteous house was free,  
 A haunt of building wren and singing bee,  
 Each scented bough of shining pensioners  
 More full than is the fire-bright gracious furze—  
 Scale-burnished beetles, chafers, hoverer-flies,  
 And moths with powdered plumes and soft deep eyes.  
 Here, where his subjects made their choice resort,  
 The Elvish Monarch held his jolly court,  
 Under a canopy rich-garlanded,  
 Where warm night-winds a fragrant incense shed.  
 Yet still one branch survives ; and still, with Spring,  
 Life will flood back to this dead dreaming thing,  
 The swelling sap will rise, the old delight  
 Wrap up one wrinkled arm with blossomed white.

**T**USCAN or Tyrian, Athenian bold,  
 Arab or Spaniard, ghosts of voyageurs old,  
 Thrice-valiant hearts who sailed these middle seas,  
 Seeking the pillared gates of Hercules,  
 A westward-beating scud, a flying drift  
 Thrusting to sunset and the land's steep rift !  
 Great vanished friends, the self-same sights ye had  
 And with the self-same glories were made glad,  
 Who saw the white sierras shoulder aloft  
 Their snowfields tall, whence airs blow cool and soft,  
 Who watched the puffins from the tranquil wave  
 Spring, and the circling gulls ! But ye were brave !  
 Knowing no earth beyond, but waters waste !  
 While I float on, nor fear lest currents haste,  
 Nor think, beyond these cliffs, of finis-terre,  
 Sure of new capes where'er my bark can fare,  
 Scorning all rumoured tale of God-cursed straits  
 Or let of wildered waves and storm-clashed gates.

**W**HY should I shrink from life,  
 Who have seen death's face ?  
 How should I, if I would,  
 For fear find place ?

Anger and scorn of men  
 He leaves aside,  
 Who has trampled into shards  
 His brittle pride.

Strange words are cast about,  
 And shouts arise,  
 That these are foiled, and that  
 Has won the prize !

But from my cherished hopes  
This boast remains :  
No crown I seek, whose limbs  
Will brook no chains !

## EVENING VOLUNTARY

**N**ow is the time of the great evening peace,  
When light and shadow lie side by side,  
Chequering the fields ; day's oppression and pride  
Are ending, the long misery and heat.  
The coppersmith flags at his forge ; his hammer's beat,  
*Tonk, tonk, tonk*, sounds but at intervals.  
A cool breath stirs ; voices of birds awaken ;  
A kingcrow chases a kite ; pert golden-eyed,  
A myna struts ; on a sudden the air is shaken  
With yelling laughter of kokils ; an oriole calls ;  
These in their fashion all witness their joy of release.  
Their fierce proud Lord forgoes his power to oppress.

I will seek the woods, the shining quietness  
Of sal and flowering laurel—there wait till falls  
The drift of darkening shadows, and memory throws  
Over loved trees and spirit her cloak of repose.

**R**ED-BERRIED banyan, still unsatisfied,  
For all your swelling bulk and verdurous pride  
Of sweeping branches, throwing out new sprays  
And fibres ever, seeking still to raise  
Fresh pillars and augment your kingdom vast,  
Fenced from the sun and the destructive blast  
Of the wild month of rains, that strips and tears  
Tough pipals and to earth the siris bears,  
Uproots the sturdy jack, and maims the teak !  
Somewhat in envy, banyan, do I speak ;  
Yet not unjustly. If my tree could show  
One-tenth so rich a pomp, such scarlet glow  
Of green-set fruit that feeds the scuffling bats  
And eager birds, and even for sordid rats  
Scatters a largesse . . . such a shining roof  
Of glossy leaves, Night's Temple huge sun-proof,  
With cool deep glooms where gods and flies awhile  
Shelter from noon . . . with many a dappled aisle,  
Where rays of light in harmless arrows fall,  
And tired winds sleep, and birds forget to call. . . .  
If this were mine, I should not grab more land  
Or seek proportions vaster, lot more grand ;  
I would not still of waxing empire dream,  
Chamber to chamber add, and giant beam  
With beam inlay, an endless swink and toil !  
With nervous itching fingers still more soil  
Grasp and for yet more swollen kingdom strive !  
No ! I should rest, and save my soul alive.

ON Sravan nights the rain  
 Roars like a river in spate ;  
 The moving walls draw near  
 With rush and bound, thin out and disappear,  
 Then swell to a steady pelting pour again.  
 Lying awake, I hear  
 How the Spirit of Sravan walks the troubled night,  
 Swaying the rain-thrashed winds for his delight,  
 This way and that the clamorous dark dividing,  
 Cleaving and thrusting the storm's black-silvery  
 freight  
 Hither and thither, racing receding gliding—  
 As he walks the watery world with his demon-gait.

THE *badal* burst ; steadily fell all day  
 The rain ; the boys on the further side of the river  
 Asked leave to go, for the water was rising fast.  
 The rain poured on all night ; dawn showed at last  
 On a mist-swept twilight world, a dusk wherethrough,  
 Twisting the rain in wisps, a rough wind flew,  
 Whirling the showers like waterspouts round and  
 round,  
 And leaping upon the trees with the tiger's bound  
 When he breaks the buffalo's back—with strain and  
 shiver  
 The garden moaned, as he ravaged and raved on his  
 way.

<sup>1</sup> June-July, the rainiest Indian month.

<sup>2</sup> Cyclonic storm.

Last, with his thousand secret arms the river  
From nulla and forest-pool his tribute drew,  
And Susunia<sup>1</sup> shook his dark drenched tresses loose.  
Huddled and hurrying, tumbling by hasty sluice,  
The yellow turbid flood rushed in, and the bank  
Crumbled, the swollen river the ricefields drank,  
Islanding copse and orchard; whirlingly shot,  
Great trunks went spinning; the stream like a boiling  
pot  
Seethed and hissed, its billows a winepress trod  
By the stamping clay-plashed feet of an unseen god.

**B**ENEATH this pipal, on a verminous mat,  
With skin-clad ribs and withered shank she lies,  
Dying by inches, after her fierce day  
Of labour—carrying water, bearing babes,  
And nameless menial tasks—the anguished toil  
For the scant meal which came with so much fear.

Though we escape the rending hands of pain,  
And shaking fevers, famine's choking grip,  
When we have slaved and striven and brought forth  
life,  
Have sheltered youth to power, for our reward  
Await us age and agues, twitching limbs,  
And brain too worn to care save for release.

<sup>1</sup> A mountain in Bengal.

THESE sojourners of a day and night pause here,  
One with the friendly life of tree and road.

Against the many-twisted serpent-trunk  
They prop a sheet of corrugated iron,  
Filched from some railway-shed, and hang with pots  
The bumps and cracks provided for their use;  
A lean appalling 'pie'<sup>1</sup> keeps guard on goods  
That kites and lepers would be loath to pinch;  
Their stolen kerosene tins crows inspect  
And pass them, certified as empty found.

Beneath a better bivouac by far  
Than those I had in Mesopotamian sands,  
Black matted heads peep out and watch the world.

I SAW a jungle-dweller, dark, unclad  
Except for waist-rag—in his ears he had  
Rosettes of oleander, glimmering red  
Stars on the close-webbed blackness of his head.  
Stark in the drizzling eve he stood, and made  
Tough sal-roots leap beneath his mattock's blade.  
His smoky hut, and hungry squalid brood,  
Waiting these sticks to cook their scanty food,  
Sufficed, and at his toil he smote amain,  
Flaunting his gladness through the cheerless rain.

<sup>1</sup> A pariah dog.

**A**GES since, in a blinding flash,  
 He came to earth, with shattering crash,  
 (Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord)

Cleaving the quaking skies asunder,  
 With lightning chisel and mallet of thunder,  
 (Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord).

The tallest simul from crown to root,  
 He smote, and an old man slew at its foot,  
 (Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord)

And, after the storm, the people found  
 A jagged rock on the blackened ground  
 (Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord).

So amid the trees they built a dome,  
 Shrining the stone, the Great God's home;  
 (Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord)

And year by year, as the tired year ends,  
 When the God through heaven his war-clouds sends,  
 (Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord)

When his white plumes flash on the dark expanse,  
 And his thunders rattle, his lightnings dance,  
 (Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord)

Women of barren aching breast,  
 Women by grievous ~~Fate~~ distressed  
 (By Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord),

<sup>1</sup> Fair.

With frightened faces and eyes that stare  
Bright as the pots of fire they bear  
(For Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord),

In procession move to the shrine, and throw  
Their burdens down, till the ground's aglow  
(For Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord),

Aglow with the tongues that flicker and shoot  
Like a thousand snakes that sway to a flute  
(To Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord).

Then home, through the folk and the clamours loud,  
On the dust-choked roads which the ox-carts crowd  
(From Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord),

With hearts where Hope's red flames upthrust,  
Lit at those flames which danced in the dust  
(To Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord),

They fare, through the eve that's athrob with drum  
And cymbal's clash, and with shouted hum  
'Siva the Sage, Ekteswar's Lord.'

**S**ULLENLY friendly, watching me they sit,  
 Their battered hands drawn close across their knees.  
 What should he say, this saheb who means them well,  
 Yet in whose veins the blood runs clean, whose limbs  
 No fires of anguish eat?

A woman there

Dandles her babe; the tainted children<sup>1</sup> crowd  
 In front, against my left; that man behind,  
 With large hot fretful face, towers o'er the rest,  
 The leader in the lepers' parles, who fans  
 Their smouldering grievances to flaming speech.  
 My speaking done, they cluster round my bike.  
 'How do they feel?' 'Well.' But I probe more near—  
 'The treatment?' Then an angry clamour bursts,  
 Of the injection's pain, the fever's throb.  
 'The profit?' 'None!' A young man lifts his feet,  
 Shows me two round deep pits—will these grow well?  
 A woman thrusts out knuckled palms—to these  
 Will fingers come again? I talk of cures,  
 Of life given slowly back, of the fell plague  
 Quenched in the crumbling limbs, that break no more.

But, as I go, about my head there scatters  
 A rain of bitter unbelieving mirth.

<sup>1</sup> A technical term. Some children of lepers are untainted.

**A**gainst the knife-keen wind she ran for warmth,  
Her torn thin cloth drawn close about her head,  
Her huddled body twisted to the cold,  
Each sinewy limb a witness to the wrongs  
Of sixty buffeting years.

A clatter of hoofs  
Rang on the road—an English lady came,  
Ruling her proud slave briskly and easily.  
The season's welcome sharpness whipped the blood  
To riot in her cheeks, and in her eyes  
Fanned to a flame the never-smouldering joy.  
A gracious nod; and the tall waler's strength  
Had borne her onward, one with the bright form  
That danced her exquisite wildness out of sight.

Spirit of Beauty, doubly manifest  
In these, my blood! Let not the visions go,  
As went this Indian dawn, without they leave  
A heart more quick to feel, an eye not blind  
To glory's steps, a braver firmer mind!

THESE tigerlilies' petals curve  
 Back like oryx-horns; their arrogant grace  
 Makes my brain an Arabian Nights; they dance,  
 Sultans in the Damascus of my soul.  
 O sinister ebony-dotted beautiful flowers!  
 Mind of the world, that Thou shouldst think of these!

Fire is a thought of Thine; this pine-fed flame;  
 And smoke which grows from fire; these warm  
 dark firs;  
 Flower-downy moths which flit from fir to flame;  
 This wall of mist, which shuts, heaven-high vale-  
 deep.

A thousand things there are whose beauty pains,  
 Tearing the exquisite sense with sharp delight:  
 The broad gold smile of sunflower; prim device  
 Of snapdragon, dainty in such different hues;  
 Begonia on these climbing cloud-wrapt ways;  
 Demure red-tongue-outrusting fuchsia; dense  
 Fragrance of heliotrope; the crinkled floss  
 Of evening primrose, pollened thick, so soft  
 The fingers feel it like a fairy's plumes;  
 Pink sea-thrift carpeting a crumbled cliff;  
 A Cornish moor, bee-murmurous heather-scented  
 Sun-drowsy, lulled with chime of double seas;  
 A Cotswold hazel-coppice, primrose-starred;  
 Moonlight on Indian waters; frosty skies  
 Of cold bright stars.

Mind whence my mind was made,  
Thinker, Dreamer, Painter, Architect !  
Why hast Thou so with beauty crammed this world,  
Which we have crowded close with graves of war,  
With factories, palaces, and works of art?

#### 64 THE AUTHOR WRITES HIS OWN EPITAPH

STRANGER, if passing by you seek to learn  
What man was he whose ashes fill this urn,  
Know: there's a ghost remembers now by Styx  
He marched with Maude, was with the few who  
first  
The embattled sandhills of Samara burst,  
And once hit Faulkner over the ropes for six.

OUR last witch was seen  
 Astraddle a plank, crossing this brook, the Ray;  
 From the Bletchington<sup>1</sup> slaughter  
 Riding this way,  
 Cromwell's troopers saw her and shot her;  
 She ducked, but they got her;  
 Their bullets crashed through the willows, and whipped  
 The yeasty moss to a froth of green,  
 And singing smote  
 Beelzebub's spawn in her foul fair throat;  
 She tumbled, and gripped  
 Her see-sawing raft—it lurched, she slipped,  
 Then choked in a swirl of red water.

'Shame on the devils who murdered a lass'  
 (The neighbours cried) 'scarce turned seventeen !  
 The bonniest wench in these borders seen.'  
 She was fond of a dip in the Ray,  
 And astride of a log that had floated her way  
 She climbed in sport  
 Just when those thieves o'er the bridge were coming,  
 Those sour-faced brutes whose bonnets with bees  
 were humming—  
 Who deemed all women were witches, who knew  
 All lives but as stuff to be slain, save the few  
 Whom the Lord considered His own (*these* slew !).  
 Fresh from their butchery Bletchington way,  
 They were looking for somebody else to slay—  
 So they shot her, in short.

<sup>1</sup> In 1643, Cromwell caught a body of Royalist cavalry on Islip Bridge, and chased them to Bletchington, two miles away, where they were all killed or captured.

And Matthew Hopkins,<sup>1</sup> when he heard,  
Was woundily vexed, and averred  
It was evilly done.  
He'd have dragged her ashore, then sifted her out  
(Those clumsy troopers had wrecked his sport),  
Searching for Satan's sign with a pin;  
Then have chucked her in,  
Shrewdly trussed, big toe to thumb,  
To try could she swim.  
Drowned, she'd be cleared as a witch, no doubt;  
There'd be one wench less in the world, to lure  
Young saints astray into thoughts impure;  
While, had she swum—  
That is, if her face but a moment rose,  
As she flung and tossed in her strangling throes—  
Her obscene idolatry proved, she'd have gone  
To the gallows-tree, in her Master's rout.

And Harold the poet concurred  
(Three centuries later), the shooting was wrong.  
But the neighbours' talk was absurd!  
The girl *was* a witch;  
On her ivory shoulder a black dog huddled,  
Her incubus, Satan's flame-eyed whelp,  
And she rode this ditch  
By her paramour's help.  
Incubus, succubus, gnome, and sprite,  
With devils by day, devils by night,  
The world is a warren—the man is dense  
Who doubts when the proofs are so many and strong.  
The camera's evidence clinches the case  
With fairies in Yorkshire—the very last place

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Hopkins, self-styled 'Witch-Finder General,' who was responsible for some hundreds of executions between 1643 and 1647. It seems likely that in 1647 he was found guilty by his own methods, and hanged for witchcraft.

One would look to find fairies—the thing's plain to  
sense!

Black magic's a cert.—those neighbours were fuddled.  
But the *shooting* was wrong;  
And thumbscrew and ducking and pricking with  
pins—  
The witch had a right to her picturesque sins.

Last—an irrelevance—when I consider  
In what a storm of dread the generations  
Went by; how demon thrones and dominations  
Darkened the mind, madding with slavish fright  
What even at ease can scarcely judge aright  
(The mind that in a fierce delirium sent  
Frail doddering eld to hideous punishment,  
And crushed defenceless beauty, hardly so  
Slaking its pangs of throbbing gibbering woe);  
How every generation to the next  
Passed on its tainted blood and vision vext;  
I wonder not that shadows haunt us still,  
That silly thoughts and fears the people fill,  
That nonsense breeds in even a poet's brain—  
I marvel anyone is kind or sane.

**I**N the meadow behind the house  
This morning I saw  
Cows feeding on apple-blossoms.  
Wrench  
Crunch  
Munch  
Shatter and scatter,  
They bit off more than they could chew,  
And splashed the grass  
With pink bright petals.  
There they stood, crushing  
In wrinkled and crinkled,  
Asquint and askew,  
Wicked black jaws  
Mouthfuls of present beauty  
And harvest to be.

I told my neighbour the poet.  
He scowled, and said he knew  
Reviewers exactly like those cows.

THROUGH my pollard-willows flit  
 Airy lives of wren and tit;  
 I watch the sailing kestrel pause  
 And clutch the sky with quivering claws;  
 A fleet of gabbling ducks goes by;  
 Then swans—stiff puffed galleons high—;  
 Dark-etched against their snowy pride  
 Like grey-blue clouds two cygnets glide.  
 Here, beyond the world withdrawn,  
 I fling my length upon the lawn;  
 And with indifferent gladness see  
 Stream and cloud and season flee.

CUCKOOS, with welcoming zest,  
 From pollards tousled and tangled  
 Shouted; and hawthorns pressed  
 The water with boughs thick-spangled.  
 A snake, its yellow head  
 High-held, with threaded gleam  
 Athwart us, as we sped,  
 Cut through the brimming stream.  
 Winking forgetmenots  
 Swung signal from the shore  
 To the mayflies' tiny yachts,  
 Danced on a foam-shot floor;  
 Thigh-deep in golden pile  
 Of buttercups, the kine  
 Munched with their grass the while  
 Mouthfuls of green sunshine.

OLD Hall the ashes from his pipe knocked out,  
 Blew through it, then he said: 'You've asked  
 about

These water-finders, sir. There's two I knows  
 And uses, when on building-jobs I goes;  
 They've found me many a spring.

John Forde of Noke,

The blacksmith—he's a tall man, tough as oak—  
 He *fights* against the power with all his might;  
 He holds his hands out *so*, with sinews tight.  
 And yet, for all that he's so strong and big,  
 The power's that fierce, I've seen a hazel-twig  
 Twist all askew, when in his fingers gripped,  
 Tugged earthward! Though he held it fast, it slipped!  
 And, when the spring's beneath, his muscles *swell*—  
 You'd not believe me, if I was to tell!  
 That's why he's grown so strong and large of arm—  
 For he's a great stout man, and takes no harm.

'T'other's a different sort. You've heard, perhaps,  
 Of Islip Tom? He's one of these small chaps,  
 And *weak*. He cannot fight the power—he shakes,  
 He lets it *slide* over his arms, and takes  
 The shock deep in his breast; and people say  
 This water-work will be his death one day.  
 He's grown *that* weak—his chest is all sunk in,  
 His face is sharp, his arms are dry and thin.  
 He shudders when the current hits his heart;  
 The sweat runs from his head, his eyeballs start.  
 And that's why, when I has him for the job,  
 I always pays an extra couple of bob.'

**W**HEN measles reached our village,  
Miss Wilmot said :  
It was the chapel children had them first—  
*Argal*, a Wesleyan local preacher brought them—  
The chapel children by a judgment caught them—  
And next, the same disfiguring anger burst  
Upon those children of the church who played  
With chapel children. Then the plague was stayed.

So all was well.

Seceders and encouragers of schism  
Alike were sprinkled with the self-same chrism ;  
And, for the weeds that through the corn had spread,  
On those who sowed and those who gave them tillage  
The one stroke fell.

She doubted watching Providence no longer—  
With every year her faith in God grew stronger—  
Miss Wilmot said.

**A**THREE-MONTHS' drought, the churches called for  
rain ;  
The bishops made new forms of prayer—in vain.  
We tried a cup-match then ; Heaven, uninvoked,  
Relented ; and the char-à-bancs were soaked.

**G**ILBERT MURRAY  
 Lecturing in Christ Church Hall—  
 Harry Eight,  
 Puff-cheeked overfed and fury,  
 Straddles o'er him on the wall,  
 Bulging-eyed, as when his bellow  
 Crashed on Lambert's plea, with 'Fellow !'  
 Thou shalt burn !'—or when he sent  
 Nan or Katherine from his bed  
 To the grave's embrace instead.

And Swagger-gait,  
 As Geneva's name he catches,  
 Fusses, fatly insolent.  
 'Body o' me ! lo, what is this  
 New false doctrine now that hatches  
 In Heresy's metropolis ?'  
 Visibly in their pictured stations  
 Tremble all the Dead, to mark  
 How the coldly-bestial stare  
 Kindles to a wolfish glare  
 On that bold heresiarch  
 Lecturing for the League of Nations.

*But Professor Murray,*  
 Always gentle courteous reasoning, never in a hurry,  
 Tells us, 'In some minds there seems confusion.  
 As for this so-called *right* of making war,  
 Civilized people more and more  
 Are everywhere coming, I think, to the con-  
 clusion. . . .'

He does not see at all  
That listening Wrath upon the wall,  
Looming through the painter's glaze  
With axe and gallows in its gaze.  
'So-called right, indeed!'

## A PERFECT BEAR

**T**HE Bear is much misunderstood ;  
Our writers do him grave injustice.  
So listen, Frank—no beast more good  
And worthy of your deepest trust is.

Witness his kindness to those two  
Their wicked uncle had forsaken !  
I tell a story known to few—  
The children wept, by night o'ertaken,

When lo, a fury friendly form !  
He gave to each a paw, then shelter ;  
Those tiny travellers from the storm  
Into his den ran helter-skelter.

They heard outside the hissing sleet ;  
They heard the forest groan and stagger ;  
The sky was like a tattered sheet  
Ripped by the lightning's fiery dagger !

They cried at first with fear ; but he  
Did with kind looks and ways restore them ,  
His capers filled their hearts with glee ;  
He set wild raspberries before them ;

He brought dry bracken for their bed;  
He shook down leaves of weeping willow;  
He placed a glow-worm by their head;  
He pulled his fur to make their pillow.

All night they slept without a stir,  
Then breakfasted on wild bees' honey;  
He took them to a woodcutter,  
And gave him wax to sell for money.

Was this not kind? And yet to-day  
How often! Frank, the words are cruel!  
'He is a perfect *bear*,' we say!  
A perfect bear! Fairplay's a jewel!

Why, if he were *a perfect bear*,  
He would be something so entrancing,  
His very name would banish care  
And we should hardly keep from dancing!

## PHILOSOPHY

**B**UNNY at burrow sits  
 And groweth wise thereby;  
 He sees the flying rooks,  
 And has no wish to fly.

For all the wrangling noise  
 Wherewith they beat the air,  
 It cuts no grass, nor brings  
 One lettuce to their lair !

And, as philosophers  
 Chew on their straws of talk,  
 So Bunny chews on his,  
 And masters root and stalk.

‘I let those fellows brag  
 And call their flappings fun ;  
 For me the world’s a field  
 Wherein to skip and run—

‘A pantry packed with grass !  
 Ah, see my whiskered face !  
 Have *you* a face as calm  
 And wise and full of grace ?’

## VALETTA FROM THE SEA, 1927

**W**HERE the Eyes of Christendom looked out  
 To spy the Turkish sails,  
 What legends crown the grey redoubt,  
 Waking heroic tales ?

‘Ask for McEwan’s Splendid Stout.’  
 And ‘Gait’s Fine Burton Ales.’

**W**HAT berries on your glimmering boughs ye bear,  
 Grey Olives, like a flock in moonlight seen,  
 Blanching the field and casting on the air  
 A haze of dimness ! reverie and dream—  
 Of Athens and the City-Guarding Queen  
 (The olive-tree's inventress)—of the glow  
 That lit the dusk within an old man's brain  
 (Remembering how through noon the nightingale  
 Deep in the dark of your close-plumaged boughs  
 Sang to Colonus' million-crocused vale)—  
 Of men, my friends, who from the lagging train  
 (Their eyes not cleansed of the deceptive gleam  
 That dances over Iraq's desert waste)  
 In an April morn with sullen clouds hung low  
 Emerging marched to where with muffled roar  
 The guns were waves bursting on battle's shore—  
 Of Kedron midnights when your leaves were roof  
 Above a blackness pierced and interspaced  
 Only with glow-worms' lamps of glassy green.

Grey Olives, 'tis the man ye knew ! for proof,  
 Look in my eyes, and see what memories rouse  
 At glimpse of your soft leaves and silken sheen.  
 No alien this—whose spirit understands  
 Each scent and sound of these beloved lands !

**T**HIS brain, with sorrow's dint  
Battered and scored—  
As a chalk-scrabbled board,  
So, with drudge  
Of anxious pain, and gray dim thought,  
One smear and smudge—  
Will nevermore take print  
Of beauty (once that wrought  
Its impress fine, clear without effort caught),  
Unless that, riving sheer,  
Some knife fell, scraping clean  
This folly, wisdom's blur  
And scars where toil's hard slipping edge has been.  
Then—if no streak of memory stayed, no white  
Of dingy thought, to mar new scriptures bright—  
Then might it bear  
Image of beauty's eyes—as from a glass  
Fling back the grass  
Wind-shimmer-stirred,  
Or flashing water, yellowing moon, quick bird,  
The virgin frankness of the encrimsoned air  
When March the almond-branches shakes,  
Or Earth's wild brightness when she wakes  
'Mid snow new-fallen, with dazed and dazzling stare.

'**A**ND the imperial votaress passed on  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.'  
To me, beneath the elms of Magdalen sitting,  
The old words, round their netted cage slow-flitting,  
Fell pausing.

'We have cates and wines enow;  
And, for the general, ale.'

'Tis well. Do thou  
Some nimble-witted fellow hire, to frame  
An hour of mirth and spangles, prinked with name  
Of nymph and hero—such a pretty toy  
As our court-scribblers make with Venus' boy,  
Dian and dolphins, tritons, lovers true  
(But crossed by fate), Mars' warrior-retinue,  
The Amazonian lady chaste as ice—  
Some delicate and intricate device  
Well sorting with a nuptial ceremony.'

And Shakespeare, bidden to prepare a mask  
For Essex his great patron, at his task  
Pondered, and juggling jigging patterns made,  
Shuffled the stale 'quaint' counters of his trade—  
Cupid all armed, the cold moon, hearts and flowers,  
Pure maidens, burning shafts, and woodbine bowers—  
Till his mind wandered back to earlier skies,  
That domed a lad walking in paradise  
Rapturous as he watched the dusk ablaze  
With rocket stars that threaded fiery ways  
And then shot madly from their spheres, to awake  
The moon-tranced glimmer of the sleeping lake,  
Where white fangs hissed in angry seethe around  
The Silver Fysshe whose back a mermaid crowned—

A mermaid singing, as she rode the tide,  
Of Gloriana great and glorified,  
Of Gloriana and a gazing earth  
(When Gloriana came to Kenilworth) .

But when the play attained a second birth,  
Before vast Gloriana in her court  
(Her mind relaxed from many a harsh report  
And rumour), did the imperial votaress  
Behind the music of sweet flattery guess  
A poor man's hopes, and send a gracious word  
To enchant her praiser? Or belike she heard  
Unheeding, and the poet left to shame  
Of failure purchased in ignoble aim?  
We know not. But the quiet words have wrought  
Unwitting record of their master's thought—  
Of how a young man strove to please a queen:  
Of how a boy (what time in fierce delight  
He walked a field with torch and pageant bright)  
Once raised his eyes, and saw the moon serene  
Sail far aloof, as in time's sky she shone.  
The ambitious rockets flared, earth shook to see  
And shouted forth in tinsel revelry!  
But the imperial votaress passed on  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.

**A** THOUSAND faces filled the room; this hall  
With beauty and with greatness flashed—all, all  
A darkened sea upon whose desert shone  
One face—a star now all the rest have gone!

WITH words as counters, talk of day and night,  
Sun, moon and stars, using such toys as these,  
I play, who towards the timeless shape my flight,  
Seeking a home that knows nor land nor seas.  
Hereafter, on the mirror of that mind  
If any shadow of these times should fall,  
Amid that brighter world how shall I find  
Utterance that can my vanished dreams recall—  
What wonder with the orange moon arose  
Over my palms or on stark Moab hills;  
With Weston's brook what whispering music flows  
Through hazel shade which March with wind-flowers  
fills?

So, after sleep, its mists of fleeing thought  
Vainly upon the mind's clear sky are sought.

THE River glares with green and crimson eyes,  
And, like the monster-haunted Amazon,  
Bellows and groans from alligator-throat.  
Night passes. And Manhattan's mountains rise  
Pale in the pearl-white dawn—chaste calm remote.  
The lurid blatant beast with dark has gone.

## ROAD TO HARPER'S FERRY

82

By wayside proof we near the place  
Where the deep-set eyes and the storm-beat face  
Gazed from the gallows' Pisgah-height.  
But life is jazzy and life is merry;  
Life is a lounge with a Lucky handy;  
Life is oysters and all that's 'yummy',  
A carted beast with a well-lined tummy.  
Life has forgotten the day-long fight,  
Body that moulders, spirit that smoulders,  
Soul that goes marching on from its stroke  
Wherewithal two nations to arms awoke.  
Tree unto tree, the miles repeat  
'Tootsie Wafers' and 'John Brown Candy'  
('We candygram it from Harper's Ferry').  
'Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet.'

## IN HOSPITAL, BROOKLYN

83

The sun, nigh setting, strikes the wall,  
And a chill through its darkness sent  
(Or was it that creeper's merriment?)  
Serves a thousand dusks to recall—  
Hours that were living with passionate thought  
Or deeds that a young man's energy wrought,  
Though the clacking shuttle of Time has left  
Only a tapestry's faded weft  
Of dim-drawn figures that skip and waver  
When a chance wind rises with fever and quaver,  
And glint in a mockery of meaning  
When a dying glow is flung on the screening.

While centuries run,  
Even as I by a patch of sun,  
A flurry of leaves, a brick's red grain,  
Men will be waked to vision again;  
Will strive as I, with words that blur,  
To tell how their minds were stabbed astir,  
What pageant shone in the brain's dead spaces,  
What clamour arose from what vivid faces !

But all is a sapless bloodless mat,  
Whose pictures are dulled, whose colours have run,  
And Memory, snatching at this and that,  
Is transient breeze and vanishing sun.

**T**HEIR helplessness was outstretched hands of prayer,  
Beseeching pity!—or gesture of despair!

Toward twilight's menace, fearful of their fate,  
Asses and slaves and womenfolk went pattering;  
Milch-camels with their colts at foot lurched swaying;  
He-goats and she-goats, ewes with burdened gait,  
Night-peering pausing kine—they moved toward  
hate,  
To charm to ruth—or slake it with their slaying—  
Or fugitive fanwise spread a shield in scattering—  
A flung-up torch of doom, the death delaying  
From one who craven waited  
On Jabbok's beach and with his heart debated !

What monstrous anger moves upon the air?  
What river-god comes rushing from his lair?  
Jabbok? that watched the caravans escape?  
The oleander-ambushed taking shape?  
Mist of a menace rising from his waves?  
Body of a blood-lust welling from his caves?  
He claims a life, the Watcher of the Ford!  
Darkness has given him power; and he is lord!

Scant presage of this dusk did dawn declare,  
Supplanter! greeting thee with angel-hosts!  
Setting thy steps upon a course so fair,  
To trip thee downward to the realm of ghosts!  
Familiar converse with the sons of light  
Closing in battle with the king of night!

Thy trembling eyes ran flutteringly afar;  
Started; and shook! fools! fools! as fugitives are!  
Straining, they saw, where sunset smouldered red  
On Gilead's crest, those sudden figures dread  
Which sought thy life! 'Twas vision; yet thy gaze  
Still followed, flaming out from thy amaze,  
While dark and distance and the world's steep rim  
Drank lusty serf and warrior moving dim  
As shadows into shadow! And thy Doom  
Couched in the chuckling brook and in the gloom  
Of whispering agnuscastus, drawing tense  
With wrath and laughter at thy lack of sense!  
Thou, wast thou mad, to leave thy life alone  
In such wild gathering angers? Hadst thou known

Thou hadst not in the half-light lingered so  
On Jabbok's shores, that housed thy raging foe !  
Now, paramount where'er these waters run,  
Unquelled, and free of the all-guarding Sun,  
He holds thee in his frontiers, in a field  
Where flight shall not avail thee ; nor to yield !  
Supplanter, thou art friendless ! see, the waste  
Has trapped thee whom thy spearmen have out-  
paced !

What thought, Supplanter, floods thy dizzying brain ?  
What planet rises on this sea of pain ?  
That Earth who gave—Yes ! yes ! thy heart avers  
That Earth, who gave this grim autochthon thews,  
Earth is *thy* mother too ! nor will refuse  
Her aid to desperate valour ! thou art hers !  
And, though thou sway and faint, though every vein  
Distend to madness, madness gives thee hope  
To grip these ravening hands nor grant them scope !  
And, body to his body, cling him fast  
Till dawn compel him to his caves at last !

Thy blood is dead within thee ; in thy mind  
Life flickers ; thou, a misery surging blind,  
No other function hast but agony !  
The lover's clasp without his ecstasy !  
A pressure and a pang ! Yet rouse ; and hark !  
Thine Adversary finds voice ; the ebbing dark  
Drains on its tides the valour thou hast held—  
His strength flows from him, by a man excelled !  
While courier-tremors now the dimness shake,  
He pleads for freedom ere the morning break !

To slay thy soul he gripped thee unaware !  
Yet now his dragon-hood unpuffs ; his prayer  
Is toward the waters and their flower-capt brink !  
But shall he cheat thee thus ? Assail ? and shrink  
When thou hast foiled him ! He that in his hour,  
When night had flung thee captive to his power,  
Sought thy destruction, shall he leave thee so ?  
No ! no ! But bless thee, going—or shall not go !

Thou hast prevailed ! thou hast, ere day undimmed  
The cloud of foe who fought thee mighty-limbed  
(That face of demon-wrath—or smiling peace ?),  
Thy blessing won, and given a God release !  
Thou as a Prince hast power ; a crest of fame  
Is on thee from this night, a victor-name !  
Jabbok forgets the dusk of turbulent throes  
And through his oleanders murmuring goes ;  
The mist has fled from his enchanted stream,  
And all the ghostly battle of a dream.

Bright over Penuel dawns thy saviour Sun !  
Thou haltest on the field that thou hast won.

INTO your arms your gray olives withdrawing,  
Gray stony hills, you lie watching aloof  
Rhone lying couched 'neath the sky's pale roof,  
Rhone with his cypresses massed on the bank,  
Dead reeds and poplars that shiver and clank,  
Rhone running blue through a snow-powdered land.

(Springs from the earth what pictured exhalation?  
Heart, you remember! 'Twas Tigris then, for Rhone;  
Gray hills of Persia, a pinnacled desolation,  
Snow-capt they rimmed the river-wrinkled plain!  
See, 'tis no mist that stars with eyes once known,  
Eyes that I loved! the dead have come again!)

Stony gray hills, from my thought draw apart!  
Leave me alone with the land of my heart:  
I would see only that sole river run—  
That wintry sun  
The waste slow thawing!  
Would see them again, my friends where they stand,  
Eyes under hand  
Watching the battle draw near wherein died  
Youth and my friends—who were friendship's pride!

(*Faune, Nymphaeum fugientum amator.*')

—HORACE, *Odes III, 18.*)

FAUNUS, lover of the flying Nymphs,  
 F Fleeing himself before the steps of Hunger,  
 Here, on the terraced hill become one field,  
 Among the rocks whose bases blunt the plow  
 And toss the waves of wheat aside has gathered  
 His family of flowers and timid lives.  
 The veteran olives round the ridge encamp  
 And lift scarred arms of threat, but storm it not.  
 Man's hungry generations vex and pill  
 This good primeval lord, and sit in siege  
 Against his refuge, yet for fostering airs  
 Of blossomtide and harvest need his favour,  
 And therefor hold their blustering lush battalions  
 Back from the flinty isle whose sudden rampart  
 Shatters the rim of cultivation's sea.  
 The blind-worm whips through the low-sweeping  
 brake  
 Of cistus and genista; through the stars  
 Of yellow orchis the green lizard rustles;  
 With sentinel eyes grape-hyacinth guards the steep;  
 And Faunus grips his ancient empire fast.

1650: *the Honourable East India Company to all Master Mariners:*  
 'We look that our vessels, ere launched on the seas  
 From Ind to Mozambique, be loaden with these.'

**S**ANGUIS draconis:  
 Fruges citronis:  
 Tramboon and cinnamon:  
 Myrrh and myrabalon:  
 Tamarind: olibanum:  
 Civet and cardamum:  
 Seed-lac and shellac:  
 Mastick and styrac:  
 Pepper and pepperdust:  
 Cloves garbled, ungarbled:  
 Bloodstones deep-marbled:  
 Attar and bela-scent:  
 Orris-root: orpiment:  
 Nutmegs and rubies:  
 Ginghams and sallampores:  
 Adatas and nassapores:  
 Newries and cocatores:  
 Percalloes and kastapores:  
 Gurrahs and balasores:  
 Calamdanies and scrutores:  
 Derribauds and kerebauds:  
 Byrampautes and durguzees:  
 Indigo and niccanees:  
 Turmeric and cavanees:  
 Grogerans and cuttanees:  
 Spikenard and dungarees:  
 Brawles: oringall bettelees:  
 Oppopanax and scamony:  
 Chequeens and toqueens:  
 Terrindans and nainsooks:  
 Doreas and tabbenees:  
 Taramandees: elatchees:

Sovaguzzees : pautkees :  
Mercolees : egbarrees :  
Morees and tapseils :  
Damask and longees :  
Benzoin and bezoar :  
Red earth and redwood :  
Dutties and rhanders :  
Dihlee stuffs and khanders :  
Birdseyes and deryeyes :  
Diapers and dimitties :  
Amber and ambergris :  
Mullmulls and methelage :  
Hornes of rhenosseries :  
Choubletts and romaulees :  
Soosees : wax of bees :  
Harital and patanees :  
Tuttenagg and jellolsyes :  
Chillies and baftas :  
Benjamins and petambers :  
Tanjebbs and jemewars :  
Vermilion and aloes  
Both lignine and socatrine :  
Sayes cantan and salloes :  
Pillongs and lingloes :  
Camphor and sannoës :  
Safflower and rangoes :  
Pumeloes and mangoes :  
Quicksilver and cossaes :  
Hummums and chucklaes :  
Duppetin catchaes :  
And prinked perpetuanoes :  
Allejars and pulfetoes :  
Musk and salpicadoes :  
Pearls and pintadoes :  
Red cloths of China :  
With taffaties of Persia :

And grezio corall  
(Large-branched, well packt,  
And free from dust and scruffe) :  
Buckshaws and wormseed :  
Tincal and cowries :  
Diamonds and cassia and elephants' teeth.

## REPENTANCE FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY

**F**ORGIVE me, Rose and Nightingale !  
The poet lays aside  
The silly wisdom that he served,  
His misbelieving pride !  
Beleaguered in a jangling mob  
Of sordid jays and crows,  
I did not hear thee, Nightingale !  
I did not see thee, Rose !

Accept me, Moth and downy Owl !  
Show me your warm deep eyes,  
Moon-glimmering wings ! night-gliding ghost  
On velvet winking skies !  
The heart that turns from righteousness  
(As others turn from sin)  
With fierce repentance such as mine,  
No devil back shall win !

‘**B**UT when returned the youth? The youth no more  
Returned exulting to his native shore,  
But in his place there came—’  
Yes? yes?  
‘There came

A worn-out man.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Tis true. And yet, this frame  
Knows quick renewals of the old delight!  
I see, I see it all! each dear-loved sight  
Springs to my vision fresh as to the gaze  
Of youth that dreamed not of the hostile days,  
That had no thought of war or martyred friends,  
But looked that quiet deeds should have like ends!

Dust-coloured doves upquivering from the dust  
With flash of white! You can bestow your trust  
Where love has set it safe! Dear forest-folk!  
Here is no step that should your fears provoke!  
You scarcely move aside! Then, wondering, scan  
What stranger comes. Doubt not! I am the man  
Who walked your ways so long, and wrought no  
harm.

You, Forest-Lady! who in sharp alarm  
And half-checked wrath (pondering what rude assault  
Stirs hither from the city) turning halt,  
With brows in question arched: ‘Who comes  
this way?  
An Englishman! yet unequipped to slay!’

<sup>1</sup> See Crabbe, *The Parting Hour*.

Spring-*Lakshmi* !<sup>1</sup> *Vanadevi* !<sup>2</sup> whose progression  
The waiting woods acclaim with swift succession  
Of shining flowers ! well my *sannyasi*-race  
You know, whose spirits keep in every place  
Our island solitude, and early learn  
Into what dust our days of action burn !  
And, Lady, test me ! touch each tree in turn  
And ask its name—*sāl*, *palās*, *bhuru*, *kend*,  
*Kusum* and *bhelai*, *simul* whose towers ascend  
To scarlet lamps of glory, *dhaiphul*'s spread  
Of twisting bugles, honeyed, horned, and red !  
Now who I am you know ! your eyes speak peace !

Spirit in Whom our spirits find release  
(That lie in bondage long) ! I had known fear  
That toil and pain and tedious ponderings drear  
Had dulled the heart and jangled all the mind,  
So that Thy ways I'd walk and walk them blind  
Where once I saw. This hour my hope stands sure,  
That evermore Thy mercies must endure !  
No Canaan I desire, but here confess  
My heart is in this lovèd wilderness,  
Where I would wander still, so I might see  
Its myriad shining eyes in league with me !  
Since neither guilt nor folly could provoke  
That Thou should'st end my friendship with Thy  
folk,  
Here has my rest begun, my timeless rest !  
Desireless yet of all desires possessed !  
Nor wilt Thou in Thy righteous anger swear  
To exclude me from this peace Thou dost  
prepare !

<sup>1</sup> The Hindu goddess of beauty and fortune.

<sup>2</sup> 'Wood-goddess.'

**S**LIM body trim-knit !  
 In your huntress kit  
 How bravely you wear  
 Winged Victory's air !  
 And how gallantly sit  
 Your brisk buoyant horse !  
 From the fetching cap  
 To black-buskinéd thighs  
 And each neatly hung boot  
 A darling distinctly !  
 Compactly ! succinctly !  
 Pocket-amazon-size !

At the high wood's edge  
 They have tidied the bounds.  
 The thorn is fresh-made :  
 Newly slashed : duly laid :  
 And—there's a gate !  
 But (why hesitate ?)  
 Your cob knows his job  
 (He has smashed quick before :  
 He can smash it once more !):  
 Firm knees, too, he knows,  
 That their pressure impose,  
 To his saddle drawn tightly !  
 Pricked ears are stirred  
 By a low urgent word :  
 And, sinews and senses  
 (Like a wave ere it plunges !)  
 Pulled taut from all straying,  
 The strong body lunges  
 The sharp brittle hedge.  
 The swing of a heel—  
*Flick ! flick !* of a switch—

A will that is steel  
Enforces his duty !  
And muscle and beauty  
Have squandered the ditch  
And barged a wide gap  
That is like a barndoor !  
And—‘Where are the Hounds ?’  
Bright lips sing out brightly.

I could have told you (had you waited)  
Well, somewhat ! But the Wind-God swerved his  
hand,  
Jangling the land  
With tossed-down noise of baying.  
You canter off elated—  
I think to hold your course  
(Years hence !) while farmers fret:  
Come war, come peace, come world's upset,  
A darling by way of profession !  
A darling by life's obsession !  
Rarely on foot:  
And usually  
crashing fences.

WE have come to the end of The Waste Land :  
Its wind-carved static waves of herbless sand :  
(Passionless central sea long sunken  
To sailless shoreless sahara).  
Grumbling and stumbling we passed  
The cheating wells whose waters were stagnant lies  
(We could not drink of the waters, for they were  
bitter,  
Therefore the name was called Marah) :  
The skeleton dumps that were singing caravans—  
Death's picnic had left its litter.  
Yes, this was a poet's skull  
(That quick beady glitter ?  
Those are rats that were his eyes ;  
They gnaw at the thongs of skin that have cracked  
and shrunken.)  
I knew him well. A fellow of infinite jest,  
Infinite hope—and infinite zest !  
Where were our guides ? They had caught some  
uplift cackle ;  
Aaron and Moses had joined the Oxford Group.  
They took up the Nazi Moloch's tabernacle,  
They followed through night a smirking and social  
star.  
Day swooned on day, drugged with the all-  
drowsing sun :  
Night was a vigil set for the *Khamsin's* blast.  
High in the glaze-brimmed vault the vultures' vans  
Shadowed our kestrel spirits that feared to rise,  
Till dusk came leaden and dull,  
Lit with the dead men's stare—the desert lilith's  
glare—

And our bodies flung down, like the drought-struck  
flowers that droop.

Yet even those hours have run.

We have come to some end at last.

We have come to some end. Only remain

Rock-ambush: masked pitfall: the climb

Hand over hand:

Cliff and bastion manned

By an unseen foe:

The grapple in darkness, the strain:

The trudge over treeless plateau

Swept by the icewind, clogged with the muffling snow.

Then the steep ways down, where afar

Through jungle and swamp, labyrinthine brake,

Plunging, a trampled tormented green snake,

In arrowy swift race

The Descender is hurled

To a lifeless lake,

A dead world.

There will be check, will be thrust,

Amid rushes that shake, over reedmats that quake:

Ford-ambush and fight

In the brambles, the asp-holes, the cobra-thickets:

On our hips, at our throat,

The Rivergod's wrestle and clutch, his swelled hood,

Lightning stroke of his fang.

Then toil and stiff push through the plain,

Step in step with the dust:

Cloaked burrow, thorn pampas, humped tussock,  
lumped clod:

And again

Armed wadi: hill-ambush: upward battle and plod.

At the end we shall doubtless find

New Aarons, new golden calves to dance to,

New rackets, new jazz tunes to prance to,

New sorts of publicist, glamour girl, go-getter.  
But we say  
The rackets will somehow be different, the impostors  
a fresh kind.  
We shall not get back our dead or the lost years,  
God will not wipe away all tears,  
But the Baalim of snowfield, stark height,  
The Baalim of underground streams,  
Will be Baalim who bring us new dreams,  
They will grant us respite  
From dry bones and mirage and sleek sand.  
So we say they are good.  
That even these famine-crazed lions which range  
From their dens sunk in Jordan's green Pride  
To prowl on the pilgrim-track, haunt the hillside,  
Are in some wise better—yes, better—  
Than hyenas that slunk round our pickets.  
There will surely be difference, be change !  
Not to anything specially grand  
Or to much of much note,  
Something rich and strange,  
But a change;  
Yes, a change, anyway !  
So we thank God and say  
We have done with the dead time,  
We have come to the end of The Waste Land.  
Of the years which were sand sand sand,  
And still sand.

BY the waters of Babylon,  
By Isis and Thames,  
By Hudson and Tigris and Ganges,  
By Tiber and Seine,  
I Ezra the Scribe  
Put up ink-horn and stile:  
And I wandered.

It was noon and no man had hired them:  
High market and no man desired them.  
So I wandered

And saw

The Son of Man stand  
In the crowd at the pithead: his eyes  
Dragged my face, as I passed him, for news.

He was laid off: disbanded:  
Remanded.  
He waited in wards:  
He hung about boards:  
I saw in his hand  
The unopened telegram flutter.

The winter's keen flaw  
Thrust a knife in his bones:  
And hunger and dread  
Twirled a dart at each nerve.

<sup>1</sup> This and the next five pieces are from the long poem *Anno Domini*, in the volume entitled *New Recessional*.

His place was in queues :  
His name mud,  
His life's pattern  
Was move on and trudge.  
His wife was a slattern,  
His daughter  
A drudge.

He was brought up in droves : as he stood  
At attention he shook ; at a nod,  
As a sheep to the slaughter  
From court unto firing squad  
Led,  
He went to his rest,  
His trade union card pinned to his breast.

Plague-festered, God-smitten,  
He crawled on splayed limbs and begged food.  
He salaamed : he broke stones  
In famine : I doled him relief.  
On the desert they tossed him and squandered.

He trembled, dissembled,  
Was craven ;  
He marched in chained file.  
On his palms was engraven  
The stigma of tribe—  
It was chattel and wastrel and thief.  
On his vesture and thigh this was written :  
Cannon fodder and labour reserve.

He was sick and infirm :  
His life came to its term.  
Drink-sodden he stooped to the gutter  
For cigarette ends.

I saw his lips mutter :  
He walked without friends.

WHEN you saw Paris compassed about with armies,  
 When the flames ascended  
 Of a mighty kingdom's burning,  
 The cry arose of a mighty nation's dying,  
 The dolour deepened of a maddened people flying  
 Down ways death dogged and clogged and bogged  
 with slaughter,  
 Eyes emptied of all prayer  
 Sped by nor cast one glance  
 At the broken calvary, the crucifix untended,  
 The votive garlands shrivelled, the candles sputtered  
 out:  
 At the helpless Son of Man,  
 Before whose bullet-splintered countenance  
 The apollyons spread their wings,  
 Rejoicing spread their dragon wings and sprawled  
 and diced  
 For the seamless robe unpriced,  
 In the Place of a Skull called France.  
 When you saw Paris compassed about with armies,  
 Did the mind remember?

The spring failed then—in the hour of her  
 returning:  
 The lilies drooped in the Valley of Humiliation,  
 Where the shepherd lad his pipe laid aside,  
 And the herb called heartsease withered that he  
 wore.  
 Men went no more, no more,  
 To the woods, for the laurels were cut  
 (The prophet laurel fallen, and to earth  
 Fallen the glorious dwelling—silent the babbling  
 water).

The paths to the chalet of the shepherdess were shut:  
The fountains of the nymphs were choked and dried:  
And the Shepherd maid who wept  
And had great pity for her realm of France—  
Men said that Joan, and Christ  
And his Apostles slept.

**I**N the Guildhall of Babylon was a Feast.  
 We brought out our vessels of gold,  
 Gifts of the Furies and Pities, sack of a thousand cities,  
 Spoil of dead empires our fathers had beaten down.  
 Lion-clawed and bull-bodied our winged gods  
 Stood ranged and spaced round the hall.  
 Bel and Asshur stared from their stone eyes.

We drank wine and praised our gods of gold.

‘Your Majesties !  
 ‘My Lords ! ladies and gentlemen ! Pray silence !’

In that same hour the fingers of a hand  
 Came forth and wrote by the gilt candlesticks,  
 On the polished whiteness, against the flickering  
 brightness,  
 Like a crab that crawls on snow, limping sinister slow,  
 Blackly clearly etched.  
 There was no more need to call for silence.

We sent then for a man they had not invited  
 (Not that he had been slighted  
 But his name was not on the Chamberlain’s list).  
 A scholar and author of sorts,  
 He was known to take some interest in politics,  
 Had foretold (so they said) things which had come  
 to pass  
 (He took no credit for this—as the haulm ends in grain,  
 Even so, he remarked, events in their causes showed  
 plain).  
 The late King had been impressed  
 (Like so many, he took considerable stock in astrology)  
 And (just before he became such an ass)

Had gone so far as to send his name for election  
To the Susa Athenaeum (the Committee of Selection  
Turned it down, the day His Majesty put himself out  
to grass).

The fellow was brought in now. He proved nothing  
much to look at;

He was small and had the stooped shoulders of a  
student.

I remember, his trousers were frayed at the knees,  
His garments were decent but old.

He did not seem interested in our gods of gold  
Or even the portraits of peers on the wall,  
But said he could interpret the writing.

It was grisly and exciting !

I am bound to admit that he left one a sense of unease !  
But a man who traffics in eagles and he-goats and  
dragons,

With Gabriel and Michael and beings with wings,  
And in general with suchlike fabulous things,  
Who mixes theology zoology  
Ornithology

Sees the world in a red light.

So we passed round the flagons.

Darius the braggart we knew

Was camped at the gates, he had battered  
A slim gap somewhere ; he planned fresh assault,  
this was true.

But against such resources as ours ?

We should break it !

We agreed that the city could take it.

Our own and our Allies' great powers

Would bring him to wreck !

We should muddle through

As we always do,

We should win the one battle that mattered

And closed the campaign.  
So we raised our champagne,  
Clinked glasses and cheered when they robed him in  
purple.

We stood when the King's shaking hands  
Hung a gold chain on his neck  
And, quaking and fumbling,  
Pinned on his breast  
The Order of the Babylonian Empire.  
We clapped when our monarch's commands  
Bade the Herald proclaim this man our Third Ruler.  
I was near, so I saw the whole show.

The man did not appear to be listening !  
Or was listening as if he heard  
A sound of foundations crumbling, of hovel and  
palace and ziggurat tumbling.  
As a mule when it is saddled, he submitted  
indifferently;  
In his eyes was a look ironic, his lips moved to  
himself.  
*'This night  
Shall Belshazzar the Chaldean be slain !  
And—this chain?'*

He fingered it as though it were made of cheap glass.

W<sup>HERE</sup> the carcass lay,  
Grim and gay

There were the newshawks gathered together—  
Our Ace Reporter: our lady of wealth and charm  
and address.

They were in the right hotel.

They were there till the bursting of foul weather,  
They were there for the breaking of the stress.

There they chummed with the right people,  
There met Gladys Maureen Gwen and Tess,  
There ran into Jumbo Fruity Jim,  
Into Tiger Tiny Beaky Bob and Tim.

As the thunders muttered,  
As the wisecracks spluttered,  
As it neared the hour of zero  
Heroine and hero

Hung above the sliding rim,  
Watched the lava boss and swell;  
Watched for me and you  
The nilometers of Hell.

Then went back with doubled zest,  
Back to Jumbo Fruity and the rest,  
Back to Beaky Maureen Gladys Gwen and Bob.

They had talked with Adolf Hermann Himmller Hess,  
With the Duce and Ciano: they had peered in Stalin's  
brain:

Over cocktails Edda told them all her mind.  
They had found the things they ought to find.

They were very very lucky!  
They were nearly left behind.

But they caught by special favour the last train.  
But they joined their frantic antic friends again,  
Joined their telephoning friends again !  
With the last of the last petrol,  
In the last car to get through,  
Past the trudging drudging mob,  
High-packed prams, cats, parrots, dogs, despairing faces  
(Just like going to The Races !),  
Spun excited and were last to board the boat.  
They were last to board the boat !  
Then they wrote their thrilling 'sagas'—  
And we knew !

They were stern to Europe's folly :  
Just but not indulgent critics : grim  
(Yet rather jolly !),  
They allowed,  
Though a saddening maddening snob,  
Far from democratic  
(Very far from democratic,  
Casual shiftless drifting planless dumb erratic),  
Yet the Englishman is best  
Of a most disheartening crowd ;  
That his Isle guards Freedom's moat.  
London took it ! She was plucky !

(Then gay wings shook out with a will !  
Rumour whispered a new kill.)

They were gallant ! they were swell !  
Did a first-class job,  
Served us faithfully and well.

Yes. They did us very well.

WE who saw England once as through his eyes  
Who fashioned *Thyrsis*—high midsummer's  
pride  
Of sun-flushed borders: dingle and loved hillside:  
Orchis fritillary cowslip: brambles dim  
Mist-garlanded—now see that landscape swim  
Into dusk ages, with the eyes of him  
Whose hand is on the bomb-switch must perceive  
Each moon new-mounted, dawn, and treacherous eve.  
Yon mountain is a seemark, his tall state  
A finger that betrays the crouching town.  
Broad fallow, level down,  
Turn traitors to our peace: the chalk-limned  
Horses,  
The Ancient Man, stars in their steadfast courses,  
Flash signals! And this brook, whose waters flow  
To push the wheel and rock the mill-pond's freight  
Of sleepy lilies, beckons in the foe  
To wreck the hamlet it beguiled to rise.

## I

IN the Wilderness a Cry ! The silence stirs.  
 Over smouldering kingdoms, gutted cities,  
 As in the Beginning Comes the Word.  
 Comfort ye my people !  
 Bid them now forget !  
 Only let  
 The mind recall  
 (Heart, remember !) how they strewed our passion's  
 path with flowers,  
 Chivalrous in shadow of the darkening hours,  
 Hellas the forsaken !  
 Hellas by the Spoiler doomed and overtaken !

'I was from Melbourne : under Olympus cold  
 They made my grave amid the heath and fern.'  
 'I was from Auckland : in the crimson brakes  
 Of oleander, under Cretan Ida,  
 Death struck.' 'On lilyed slopes of asphodel,  
 Where the green waters of Litani race  
 Through myrtle copse and styrax thicket I fell,  
 Far from my Ebbw Vale.' 'Far from Clydesdale,  
 In the narrow seas I died.'

## II

In the stillness, where the firs  
 Range in starkness, rigid darkness ;  
 By the endless reedbeds, on the reddening plain  
 Where through blackening cornscape once of old  
 the Invader came,  
 Beside his piled-up cart again  
 The peasant thrusts fire's sickle into his ripened grain :

Mansion minaret and hovel fall  
Tumbled in flame.  
Dnieper's strong sinews like a steed unharnessed leap,  
His plunging waters sweep  
Seaward the labouring years,  
Years that were freighted low with toil and dreams,  
Years now the driftwood of his hurrying streams !

### III

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light !  
In the valley of glimmering bones close watchers have  
caught  
The glitter of movement, the murmur and shudder of  
breath.  
In Galilee of the Gentiles, Illinois of the Isolation :  
In Oxford the islanded kremlin, shut in  
Amid whisper of winds that stroke alder and willow,  
Lapped round with harsh din  
Of the clanking and changing of gears  
And sleek swirling race on full throttle, smooth tyre ;  
On the islanded upholstered mind  
The dayspring is breaking !  
On the cigarette ashends, *New Yorker*, teatray  
That waits the awaking, slow yawn and drugged shaking  
Of head that lies permed on the pillow :  
On the clubs where they gossip and doze,  
Where stout buttocks lounge deep  
In caress and soft clasp of sunk chairs,  
Under glaze of sham eyes, sham forest of antler and pelt,  
Sham gusto of Saxon, bogus ardour of Celt :  
Where Heavy and Light Brigades ride  
And Dervishes rush on the maxims and squares,  
And Buller and White  
Or Wilson and Inglis (God knows !  
But grand men who played well for their side !),

While their horses most patiently pose,  
The dutiful dead drawn apart from their feet,  
After Delhi or Ladysmith meet !

Upon those  
Who sat in the region and shadow of death,  
The dead places, dead faces,  
On these has light shone !

**W**HEN mind above  
 Dim sea of consciousness  
 Dawned, speech I heard :  
 That Thou wast Love—  
 Power—Righteousness—  
 The Undying Word  
 Uttering Itself unceasingly—the Rock  
 Of Ages, set in Being's fluctuant stream.  
 And in my own life, I confess,  
 That (more or less)  
 This faith looked fact.  
 But then, I am not proud, sir—do not deem  
 My merits great—nor dare myself esteem  
 As worthier than the countless crowd whose days  
 Are such that Thou shalt never have my praise !  
 I have thought much of these :  
 Nearing the end of this my pilgrimage,  
 I say I find  
 Surety beyond all doubt, that Thou art Mind—  
 Mind certainly—this I admit,  
 Yet get small good of it.  
 Mind strong but evil, bent to vex  
 Our poor tribe so, that needlessly we rage  
 With thoughts from out some devil's mind unpacked !  
 Making this world, Thou didst not care to save  
 The half-caste or the negro or the slave !  
 But some hast placed in ease,  
 As king or noble, swaying by right divine ;  
 As Roman, Nordic, Aryan, massing earth  
 With wrong and anguish stark—this was Thy plan !  
 Others Thou hast sent forth with blot of birth,  
 Or pigmented awry and marked for pain.  
 Cold as the moon, Thou didst on Laurian mine  
 Or latifundian kennel or lynching pyre

Or martyr's stake look down, while prayer proved  
vain.

Thou hast no justice, sir; wert Thou a man,  
This would I say. The laws which Thou hast made  
Work in thick cloud; the stricken knows not why  
He is stricken, nor what debt by death is paid.  
Yet is my mind so foolish, that I feel  
That for some sake not mine I dare not bow  
To wrong Thou hast enthroned—and day and night  
Falls on my life, on all I do, think, write,  
Shadow of some Power that watches. Is it Thou?

**F**RRIEND, who spake his name?  
That name for many a day  
I had not heard !  
Going my listless way  
Unpanged, unstirred,  
Almost I had forgot  
The sleeping air  
Nourished a fire so hot—  
Almost was unaware  
My own heart's secret lair  
Hid close so fierce a pain,  
That died to spring again !  
Strange that a spoken word  
Should kill the years' long peace !  
Light syllables that fell  
And vanished with their birth,  
Light-riding keels that scarce  
Furrowed the silent air !

Heart ! when the citadel  
Drowsed, and the sentinel  
Dallied with idle dreams,  
No voice or tread I caught  
Of foes that filled the plain—  
Of sleep was all my thought !  
I am shut round, it seems !  
Who fired that random shot  
Whereby the night became  
(Night that was drugged with dreams)  
Thunder and sheeted flame ?

Who was it spake that Name ?

## I

**B**EYOND the harbour drift  
And pace far out of sight  
Impatient tides that lift  
Against the fire-hung night—

Against the thunder-glow  
Of stars that curb their hate  
(Those glimmering wastes below  
Must watch and float and wait).

There is a fierce wind stalks  
Athirst and gripped to slay—  
There is a dim moon walks  
Loiteringly astray.

## II

She wanders till the morn  
Shall drive her weakness hence;  
The prowling waters scorn  
Her gracious impotence.

But still the impartial stars  
Thrust back that raging crew,  
Who may not pass their bars  
Before their season due;

Who plunge and peer and roar,  
And sullen wait the hour  
The wind shall burst my door  
And toss me to their power.

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